# WHEN NATIONAL COMMUNICATION UNDERSELLS NATIONAL PERFORMANCE: THE UNANNOUNCED TOP-100 RESULTS OF UZBEK UNIVERSITIES IN THE THE SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT RATINGS 2026

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***Abstract.*** *International ranking results function as signals twice over: outward, toward the global academic market, and inward, toward the national system deciding where to direct effort. This paper documents a gap between the two circuits. A complete national inventory of Uzbek results in the Times Higher Education (THE) Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026, compiled from the official published goal tables for all 50 ranked institutions across all 17 SDG tables, identifies 24 top-100 positions held by 11 institutions. The official ministerial announcement of the national results, published on 25 June 2026, reported 8 of them. The 16 unannounced positions include four of the country's six strongest results overall, among them world rank 10 in Zero Hunger, ranks 13, 14 and 19 held by a single university, and rank 24 in Affordable and Clean Energy. The paper reconstructs the full inventory, compares the two public sources, and discusses the costs of partial signalling: foregone reputational return for the institutions concerned, a weakened demonstration effect for peers deciding where to concentrate, and a distorted picture of where national comparative advantage actually lies. A simple remedy is proposed: a standing practice of full goal-level public accounting, at negligible cost, aligned with the structure of the instrument being communicated.*

***Keywords:*** *university rankings; science communication; higher education policy; SDG; signalling; Uzbekistan*

## 1. Introduction

When a country's universities succeed in an international assessment, two communication circuits carry the news. The first is the assessment's own publication, global, complete, but addressed to a specialist audience. The second is national official communication, selective by nature, but the channel through which the result reaches domestic institutions, media and policy. If the second circuit transmits only part of the first, the country undersells its own performance, and, less obviously, deprives its institutions of the demonstration effect that visible success provides.

This paper documents such a gap for a specific, fully verifiable case: the results of Uzbek higher education institutions in the THE Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026 [1]. Both sources are public. The rating's goal tables list every position; the ministerial announcement of 25 June 2026 lists the results selected for national communication [2]. Comparing them requires only a complete national inventory, which this paper provides.

The comparison is not an exercise in fault-finding. Press releases compress by design, and the announcement in question accurately reported substantial achievements, including the entry of 24 institutions into the global top-1000. The point is analytical: the selection pattern of the announcement, once made visible, reveals which kinds of results the national signalling system currently amplifies and which it leaves silent, extending the author's research line on ranking methodologies [8] from methodology analysis to communication analysis, and the silent set turns out to contain much of the country's strongest evidence.

Conceptually, the paper draws on two literatures. The sociology of quantification treats public measures as communicative acts whose effects depend on circulation, not merely on computation [3], [4], [9]: a rank that does not circulate domestically does not discipline, motivate or teach. The signalling perspective in higher education policy treats official communication as a selection mechanism that tells institutions which achievements the system values [5], [10], [11], [14]. Reading the ministerial announcement through both lenses converts a routine press release into data: its inclusions and omissions constitute a revealed preference over result types, and the preference can be compared against the full verified distribution of results.

**2. Data and method**

The inventory derives from the author's complete national participation matrix for the 2026 edition: all 50 ranked Uzbek institutions across all 17 SDG tables, 471 filled cells, compiled from the official published tables and validated in three steps (reconciliation of column counts against the site's displayed result totals for the tables collected under count control; cross-checking of all 150 published institution profile entries against the matrix; verification of the methodology's minimum-participation rule). A verified regularity of the rating's public data supports the inventory: in all 150 verifiable cases, the display of an exact score corresponded to a top-100 rank position, without exception, so exact positions can be enumerated exhaustively from the public tables.

The comparison source is the official announcement of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of 25 June 2026, which lists eight goal-level achievements by name and rank. Each of the 24 inventory positions was coded for presence in that list. The coding contrasts two public sources, the rating tables and the

ministerial press release; it does not contrast official with unofficial data, since both are official in origin.

**3. Results**

The inventory contains 24 top-100 positions held by 11 institutions across 10 goals. Eight positions appear in the ministerial announcement; sixteen do not. Table 1 lists the sixteen unannounced positions in rank order.

Three features of the unannounced set stand out. First, it contains four of the six strongest national results overall: rank 10 in Zero Hunger (TIIAME National Research University), and ranks 13, 14 and 19 (Tashkent State University of Economics, in Zero Hunger, Quality Education and Sustainable Cities respectively). The announced set, by contrast, includes positions at ranks 81 and 82. Announcement status is thus not a function of result strength. Second, a single institution accounts for half of the unannounced set: Tashkent State University of Economics holds eight top-100 positions, none of which was announced, despite their spanning eight different goals and constituting a third of the entire national inventory. Third, the unannounced set includes the clearest case of profile-defying success in the national data: Bukhara State University, a classical regional university, at rank 24 in Affordable and Clean Energy, ahead of several announced positions in the same goal.

A fourth feature concerns goals rather than institutions. The announced set draws its results from five goals, while the full inventory spans ten; among the goals entirely absent from the announcement are Zero Hunger, which contains the country's fourth-strongest result, and the whole cluster of environmental goals (Climate Action, Life on Land, Life Below Water, Clean Water) in which national institutions hold six top-100 positions. The communicated map of national strength is thus not only thinner than the verified map; it is differently shaped, emphasising the social goals in which national participation is heaviest and omitting the environmental goals in which national performance per participant is strongest.

*Table 1. The sixteen unannounced national top-100 positions, THE Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026.*

| SDG | World rank | Institution |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 10 | TIIAME National Research University |
| 2 | 13 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 4 | 14 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 11 | 19 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 7 | 24 | Bukhara State University |
| 4 | 28 | Tashkent SU of Uzbek Language and Literature |

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|---|---|---|
| 15 | 39 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 13 | 41 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 8 | 51 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 14 | 55 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 2 | 69 | Fergana State Technical University |
| 7 | 69 | National Pedagogical University of Uzbekistan |
| 13 | 85 | Termez State University |
| 16 | 85 | Tashkent State University of Economics |
| 6 | 87 | Fergana State Technical University |
| 6 | 94 | Tashkent State Technical University |

## 4. Discussion

The costs of partial signalling run in three directions. For the institutions concerned, an unannounced result generates no domestic reputational return: rank 10 in a global goal table, unreported nationally, is invisible to applicants, partners and governing bodies who do not read the rating's tables directly. For the system, the demonstration effect is weakened: peers deciding where to concentrate reporting effort learn from visible successes [12], and the visible set currently excludes the strongest examples of both concentrated specialisation (a single university with eight positions) and profile-defying entry (a classical university among energy leaders). For policy, the selection pattern distorts the map of national comparative advantage: the announced set emphasises goals and institutions that partially overlap with, but do not represent, where the country's strongest verified results lie.

The gap is also self-reinforcing. National participation in this rating grew from 12 institutions in 2021 to 59 in 2025 before consolidating at 50 in 2026 [13], an expansion at least partly driven by the visibility of earlier successes. If the signalling circuit systematically under-reports the strongest results, the system learns from a biased sample of its own performance, and the strategic lesson that these results embody, that concentration in well-chosen goals produces world-rank visibility, propagates more slowly than it could.

The remedy is inexpensive. A standing annex to the annual announcement, listing every exact national position by goal, would cost a page; in a policy environment that formally ties recognition and incentives to ranking outcomes [15], completeness of the national record is not cosmetic. It and would align national communication with the structure of the instrument it communicates. Nothing in this

requires editorial judgement about what to celebrate; it requires only completeness about what occurred.

It is worth distinguishing this argument from two adjacent claims that the paper does not make. It does not claim intent: selection in press communication has many innocent causes, from drafting deadlines to reliance on institutional self-reports, and nothing in the data identifies a motive. It also does not claim that announcement causes performance: the paper documents an information gap, not an outcome effect, and the behavioural consequences sketched above are mechanisms with strong theoretical support [3], [4], [7] rather than estimated effects. The claim is narrower and therefore firmer: the national signalling circuit demonstrably transmits a partial and non-random sample of verified national results, and the partiality is costless to remove.

**5. Conclusion**

Of 24 verified national top-100 positions in the THE Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026, the official national announcement reported 8; the 16 unannounced positions include four of the six strongest national results. The asymmetry costs institutions reputational return, weakens the system's demonstration effect, and blurs the national map of comparative advantage. A complete goal-level public accounting, proposed here as a standing practice, would close the gap at negligible cost. More generally, the case illustrates that in voluntary, goal-selective rankings, national signalling is part of the strategy space: what a system announces shapes what its institutions learn to attempt.

The case also has methodological value for research on ranking communication in other systems. Because both sources are public and the exact-score regularity makes the inventory mechanically enumerable, the announced share of verified results, here 8 of 24, is a replicable indicator that can be computed for any country and any edition, enabling comparative study of how national systems curate their own ranking news. Systems that announce completely and systems that announce selectively should, by the demonstration effect logic developed above, exhibit different diffusion patterns of participation strategy over subsequent editions [6]; the indicator proposed here makes that hypothesis testable.

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