

Una Europa Sustainability and Climate Protection Strategy

Task Force Sustainability and Climate Protection

Strategy

Version 1

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June 2022

Sustainable development and climate protection belong to the biggest global challenges of the twenty first century and will remain focal points of academic research and University life in the decades to come. We, the Una Europa – Alliance of European Universities, share an aspiration for the “sustainable university” as an institution that rises to meet global environmental and societal challenges. We systematically develop our communities, opportunities, spaces, and projects to meet these challenges. We seek to create a positive impact in our own work and institution, and to influence more widely across society.

This is relevant not only in teaching and research, and third-mission activities but also in our campus management, community engagement and procurement. We see it as our institutional responsibility to actively shape this global discourse and to address the corresponding challenges by including all areas and stakeholders of the university.

We recognize that our university alliance has a major role to play in delivering transformational change in addressing challenges to sustainability such as the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, as well as contributing to solutions like the energy transition, awareness raising, and behavioral change. Our commitment includes leading by pioneering examples and innovation processes on our own campuses.

We strongly participate in the academic discourse on the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2015, and in their implementation in our own area of responsibility. Our members have developed various focuses and strengths in the area of sustainable development, recognizing our different institutional arrangements and progress to date. We see this diversity as an opportunity for a closer cooperation in institutional and governance related issues of sustainable development.

To continuously improve our sustainability management and engagement, we commit to the following courses of action:

Governance

- Establishing a mission statement as well as an implementation and reporting process, which outlines our attitude and objectives in the field of sustainable development and sets a net zero climate goal in line with climate science
- Developing a strong management structure and a whole-institution approach to sustainability interlinking our efforts in research, teaching, operations and outreach activities
- Acting as a Living Lab for society by fostering innovation and new technologies as well as driving new mindsets and behaviors
- Creating paths to grow sustainability leadership amongst our staff and students and exploring means of cross-institutional mutual learning and support

Teaching and Community Engagement

- Promoting that all students and staff of our universities will have access to courses and programs focusing on key sustainability competence development
- Developing opportunities for open learning that can be provided for our communities
- Engaging our university community - including students, staff and other stakeholders - in dialogues and actions on sustainability, thereby strengthening their awareness and commitment both in professional and personal life

Operations

- Reducing GHG emissions from 2018 levels by 2030, and at a minimum developing and publishing an ambitious target, making the scopes according to the GHG Protocol transparent in 2022
- For those institutions that engage in investment, to integrate climate change considerations into activities and thereby influencing the wider system of finance
- Making sustainability criteria a guiding principle in our procurement, including office supply, IT, lab equipment and services, as well as in our building design and maintenance
- Developing a mobility strategy for facilitating academic business travel (with a special focus on flights) and for a sustainable campus, including commuting options that meet the requirements for climate protection

Healthy and Resilient Communities

- Recognizing the ecological characteristics of our campus and nurturing its biodiversity by development and management of sustainable green spaces, e.g. by providing urban green corridors
- Promoting a culture of sports and welfare throughout the campus to build strong, inclusive and resilient communities
- Understanding the importance of sustainable campus environments – both built and natural – for the health of staff and students as well as our neighboring communities
- Integrating learnings from wellbeing and mental health initiatives into the HR strategies and personnel development programmes as well as student counselling services of Una Europa members.