Universiteit Utrecht

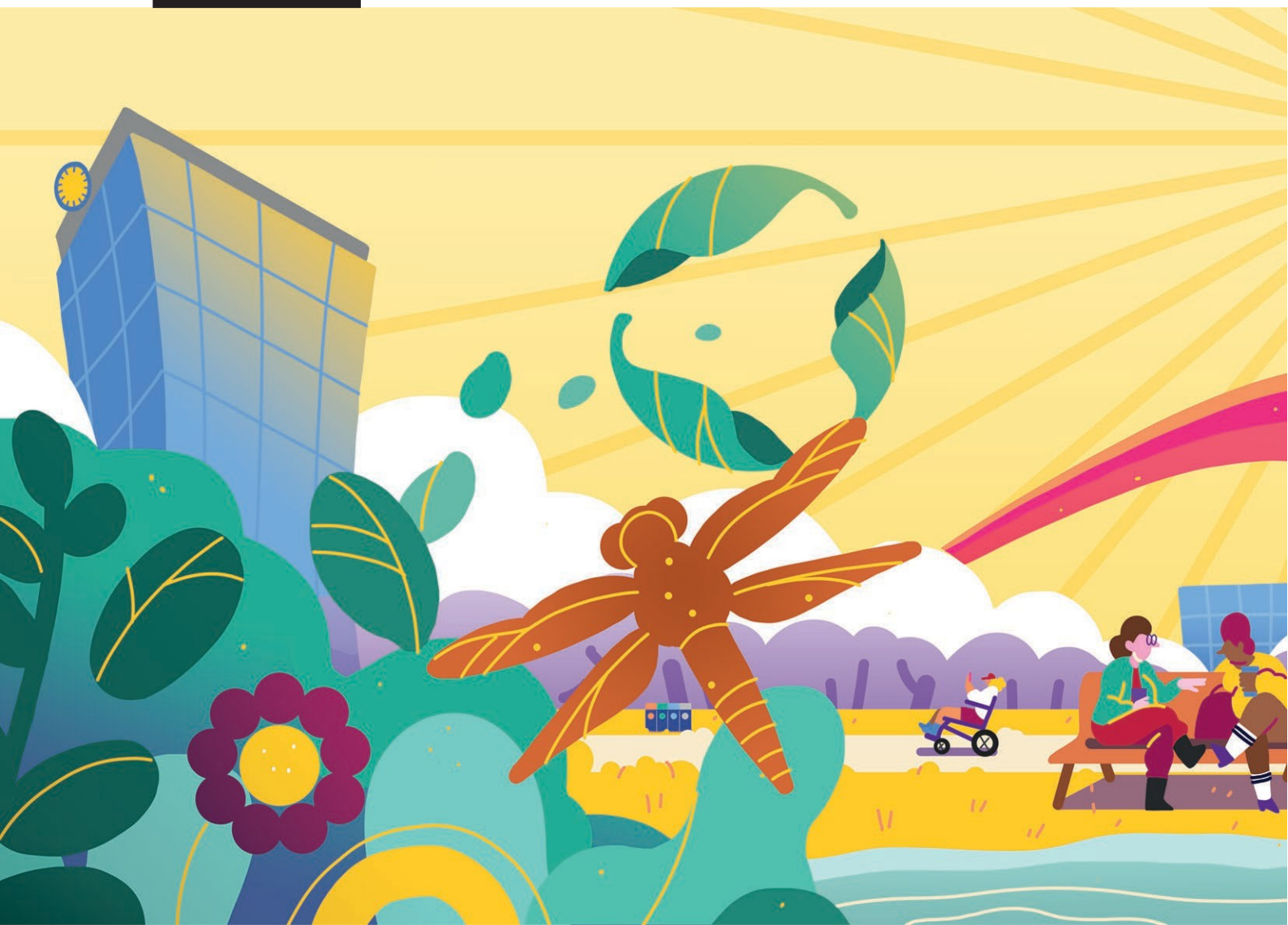
Strategic Sustainability Execution Plan

A plan for 2030 and beyond

Campus & Facilities
Management May 19, 2026

Dutch version

DUURZAAMHEID



1. Purpose 6
1.1. Mission of Utrecht University 6
1.2. Core Values of Utrecht University 6
1.3. Vision on Sustainability 6
2. Strategy 10
2.1. Strategic intent: How will we get there 10
2.2. Intermezzo: A long-term system-critical economic business case 11
2.2.1. Energy: 12
2.2.2. Biodiversity 12
2.2.3. Circularity 14
2.2.4. Climate adaptation 14
2.3. What will we focus on 15
2.3.1. Dual Materiality Analysis - DMA 15
2.3.2. Maturity Readiness for Sustainability at UU 15
2.3.3. Maturity 17
2.4. Enablers: What resources and skills will we use 21
2.4.1. Our people, our expertise 21
2.4.2. Our assets 22
2.4.3. Frameworks 22
3. Execution 25
3.1. Goals and initiatives: what should we do? 25
3.1.1. Strategic (environmental) sustainability themes 25
3.1.2. Transition paths 27
3.1.3. Embedding within UU 27
3.1.4. Portfolio management 27
3.1.5. Funding 28
3.1.6. Legislation 28
3.2. Strategic framework, monitoring, and reporting 29
3.2.1. From Materiality Analysis to Programs 29
3.2.2. Monitoring and Reporting: CSRD 29
3.3. Programmatic Approach to Sustainability Within the Organization 31
3.3.1. Internal Collaboration Partners 32
3.3.2. The coordinating role of the Sustainability Office in the SSEP 33
3.3.3. Communication Strategy 33
4. From ambition to impact 37

APPENDIX 1 - Energy Transition Path 38
I Our vision for the future: a sustainable energy supply 38
II Our Impact 38
III Our ambition 38
IV Goals and approach 39
V Milestones 40
APPENDIX 2 - Transition Pathway for Biodiversity and Ecosystems 41
I Our vision for the future: A future in which people and nature reinforce each other 41
II Our Impact 41
III Our ambition 42
IV Goals and approach 42
V Milestones 44
APPENDIX 3 - Transition Pathway: Circularity and Waste Management 45
I Our vision for the future: a university where materials, knowledge, and ideas circulate 45
II Our Impact 45
III Our ambition for 2030 46
IV Goals and approach 46
V Milestones 51
APPENDIX 4 - Climate Adaptation Transition Path 52
I Our vision for the future: a resilient and future-proof university 52
II Our Impact 52
III Our ambition for 2030 53
IV Goals and approach 53
V Milestones 55
APPENDIX 5 - Climate Mitigation Transition Path 56
I Our Vision for the Future: Toward a Climate-Neutral Utrecht University 56
II Our Impact 56
III Our ambition for 2030 57
IV Goals and approach 58
V Milestones 62

Strategic Sustainability Execution Plan, Utrecht University

Tell me and I forget, teach
me and I remember,
involve me and I learn.

Benjamin Franklin

This Strategic Sustainability Execution Plan is a detailed elaboration of the University of Utrecht Strategic Plan 2030, which articulates UU's strategy at the highest level of abstraction. It makes a significant contribution to meeting national and international commitments regarding sustainability, including:

- Climate Challenge (COPs from Paris to Dubai)
- European Green Deal (including becoming climate-neutral by 2050 and moving toward a circular economy)
- Global Biodiversity Framework (COPs on biodiversity from Montreal to Cali), EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, and the Birds and Habitats Directives)
- Clean Water (Water Framework Directive)

We endorse the mission and core values of the UU Strategic Plan. This Strategic Sustainability Implementation Plan provides a detailed vision of sustainability, which gives concrete substance to the theme "focus on sustainable transformation" from the UU Strategic Plan 2030.

The Sustainability Strategic Implementation Plan rests on two pillars: a scientific one and a business management one. In this document, we describe how we are integrating sustainability into Utrecht University's operations.

The Pathways to Sustainability impact plan gives substance to the academic mission for sustainable transformation. Both strategies overlap and were developed in close coordination. The academic pillar

and the business management pillar together give substance to the ‘Focus on sustainable transitions’ from the UU Strategic Plan 2030.

This Strategic Sustainability Implementation Plan focuses on ecological aspects. The structure of this document serves as a model for the elaboration of the Social and Governance ambitions and goals. In 2026, the Sustainability Office, in collaboration with the relevant departments, will also define the form and content of the Social and Governance ambitions and goals. Once these are ready, they will be added to this implementation plan and resubmitted to the Executive Board for approval.

1. Purpose

1.1. Utrecht University Mission

We are working to build a better world.

We do this by investigating complex issues across disciplinary boundaries. We connect thinkers with doers so that new insights are put into practice. We give students the space to develop. In this way, we make substantial contributions to society, now and in the future.

Source: Utrecht University Strategic Plan 2030

1.2. Core Values of Utrecht University

Ambition, commitment, inspiration, and independence are our core values.

Source: Utrecht University Strategic Plan 2030

1.3. Vision on Sustainability

There is a broad and growing societal awareness that the climate and biodiversity crisis is an inescapable reality that requires profound changes. There is indeed a collective awareness that we must change.
At the same time, there is also doubt about whether we can do it, and so far too little collective will to structurally change our behavior. Despite protests by activists and good examples from an increasing number of individuals, the fundamental willingness to change is low. This stems in part from a long-standing narrative that, to stop climate change, we all need to do less.

Universities can, and have a social responsibility to be the Agents of Change in these times, forcing breakthroughs in a system that has stalled. It has always been the great scientific thinkers (Galileo, Rousseau, Darwin, etc.) who, with remarkable and profound narratives, opened the “doors of the imagination” and paved the way for systemic change. Once again, a conceptual shift is needed—away from the narrative of *scarcity and deprivation* in which we seem trapped, toward a narrative of *balance*.

The world in which we curb the climate crisis is not worse or less. It is different; above all, it is healthier, fairer, more inclusive, and happier. It is in balance: for people, animals, ecosystems, between countries (of the Southern and Northern

hemispheres) and for the planet. It lays the foundation for broad prosperity for everyone. This sustainable transformation leads to a future that looks like this:

- *Clean and Renewable Energy: At UU and within the USP, clean, renewable energy is abundant. Our buildings and labs utilize this abundant renewable energy, but frugality is in the organization's DNA, as evidenced by our labs' certification at the highest level of sustainability. USP is the prime example of how to rapidly reduce national and international dependence on fossil fuels, which are currently alarmingly expensive. The abundantly available clean energy will lead to a boost in prosperity.*
- *Biodiversity and Ecosystems: We cherish life. At the USP, people, plants, and animals live in harmony. We recognize that we are part of a natural ecosystem and act accordingly. Native flora and fauna thrive at the USP. Animal welfare is a given. The water in the Fortgracht is drinkable. Food production is local and plant-based, and our biodiversity footprint is net zero.*
- *The much greener USP inspires our students, scientists, and staff to creativity and top performance. The USP is a Garden of Knowledge, where people love to work and students love to study. Interactions take place outdoors. Mental well-being is high, loneliness is low.*
- *Circularity and Zero Waste: Everything gets a second, third, or even fifth life. We have closed the raw materials cycle. We take good care of our belongings. Not only in our labs, but as an institute, we make conscious purchasing decisions and buy only what is strictly necessary. All materials we use are temporary and are given a second life within or outside the USP. We no longer landfill or incinerate waste. We source the raw materials for new developments—cheaper than new materials—from buildings within the USP, the city, or the region.*
- *Climate Mitigation and Adaptation: We have mitigation measures in place; CO2 emissions are net negative. Our scientists have succeeded in converting CO2 into methane (thanks to the abundant renewable energy available). Because CO2 remains in the atmosphere for 75 years, we are fortunate to have started adapting in time. The climate crisis is not getting worse, but it is not reversible—or only so in the very long term. So we have adapted our environment to the new reality.*

As UU, we are embracing our role. We believe that change is necessary, we believe it is possible, and we will demonstrate that we are committed to it. We realize that transformation does not happen on its own. The path to transformation is long and bumpy, but worth pursuing. Transformation requires hard work, perseverance, and momentum. Because as long as climate change and biodiversity loss outpace behavioral change, we will not stay within planetary boundaries.

A world in balance is a vision worth pursuing. Admittedly, it feels elusive and abstract, and the first steps to take are not yet concrete enough. Those first steps are necessary, however, or else the vision could quickly erode or lose public support. So before we arrive at a world in balance, we must first do less harm. Our starting point is a situation of scarcity—of money, biodiversity, grid capacity, attention, raw materials, and truth. It is precisely this precarious context that calls for realistic, measurable, and concrete first steps:

- *Energy:*
    - Contribute to the energy transition by reducing our energy consumption, increasing the share of renewable energy in our energy mix, and using energy efficiently by sharing it smartly with other users on USP.
- *Biodiversity and Ecosystems*:
    - Contribute to increasing biodiversity and water quality in the Netherlands by enhancing biodiversity locally on our own grounds. Contribute to reducing the biodiversity footprint in the University of Utrecht's supply chains.
- *Circularity and Zero Waste*:
    - Preserving the value of products, materials, and other resources, thereby reducing environmental impact, minimizing waste, and increasing efficiency during production and consumption.
- *Climate adaptation:*
    - Adapting as a university to current and expected climate change and its consequences.
- *Climate mitigation*:
    - Contributing to the mitigation of climate change by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the Paris Agreement

The first steps are not an enticing prospect; they do not inspire people to take action: "You have to eat less meat, you can't fly anymore, energy is getting more expensive."
Here, too, universities have an important role to play. To train new leaders who have the knowledge to make a clean start, set new priorities, collaborate rather than compete, break conventional rules, and above all, think big.

Utrecht University is uniquely positioned to lead the transition to a sustainable future. Through our transdisciplinary approach, steadfast commitment, and the training of future leaders who dare to make choices, we can drive the necessary conceptual shift toward a world in balance. We are

not naively optimistic about the state of sustainability, nor do we believe in a simple "technofix." Our research breakthroughs are disruptive thanks to rigorous science and transdisciplinary commitment. We believe in creating impact by forging collaborations—within UU between science and operations, and outside UU with USP partners, the city, and the region. We have the courage and the capacity to experiment in living labs on and off our own campuses, to learn from setbacks, and the perseverance to ensure scientific knowledge benefits society.

The University keeps its sights set on a world in balance. To get there, it will take significant steps on the path to transformation over the next five years. Because we believe a better world is possible. We feel responsible for this, and that is why we have set this as our mission. This requires faith, commitment, and dedication to pave the way toward a planet in balance. With 390 years of experience in driving progress, we are uniquely equipped to serve as a catalyst for this transformation. We are radically hopeful that a planet in balance is possible—a planet that is fairer, more inclusive, and healthier.

"The word 'radical' comes from Latin; its root is 'root,' like the roots of a tree. I see hope as something radical, in the sense that it's about being rooted in your values and your vision, even when your chances of success are slim. That's why I distinguish between optimism and radical hope. Optimism is a glass that is half full; everything will be fine, despite the evidence. Radical hope is about being committed to your vision, even if you may not succeed."

Roman Krznaric

2. Strategy

2.1. Strategic intent: How will we get there

"The collaboration, connections, and strong communities within the university community make us strong in what we do. We seek each other out, inspire one another, and care for one another. We collaborate across organizational units and disciplines, and with external partners and alumni. We seek co-creation and ways to strengthen and learn from one another. We value a culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as social safety and the well-being of staff and students. We offer an inclusive and stimulating work and study environment and continue to develop in this area."

Strategic Plan UU 2030

At UU, we believe that through transdisciplinary collaboration we can make the greatest societal impact. Research and operations are closely linked. This collaboration already exists; we cherish it and are expanding it. We are streamlining our agendas and utilizing our campuses as living labs. This collaboration is not limited to our institute. After all, climate change and biodiversity loss do not respect geographical boundaries. Major complex societal issues require action across different scales. That is why we engage in collaborations at the following scales—sometimes operational, sometimes scientific, and preferably a combination of both—with the goal of making a societal impact:

- *Collaboration within UU:* Goal: Operations, research, and education reinforce each other on sustainability;
- *Collaborating with USP partners*: Goal: A regional strategy on sustainability;
- *Collaboration at the regional level*: Goal: Impact and awareness in the region;
- *Collaboration at the national level*: With other universities: to embrace our social responsibility, especially in these times, by taking the lead on sustainability as institutions of knowledge; With the national government: Delta Plan for Biodiversity Recovery, OC&W CSRD guidance;
- *International collaboration*: In Europe, both with the European University Association (EUA) and LERU, as well as through the European Horizon and Erasmus+ programs and the Nature Positive Universities network.

Through this collaboration, UU can increase its societal impact. An important means of doing so is testing sustainable innovations in living labs.
Because universities are increasingly expected to function as living laboratories for sustainability by combining research, education, and practice

and thus demonstrate leadership by making a societal impact in the transition to a sustainable society. The living labs contribute to:

1. the continuity of knowledge development and dissemination across projects, staff changes, and student cohorts;
2. a dynamic learning environment where students can engage with real sustainability challenges on the campuses (both city center, UCU, and USP);
3. improving organizational agility in responding to sustainability-related assignments by strategically mobilizing internal staff capacity, integrating academic expertise, and leveraging student engagement, thereby reducing dependence on external consultants;
4. Contributing to the development and implementation of sustainability policies and projects on UU campuses;
5. Increasing UU's visibility as a leader in sustainability, both internally (students, staff) and externally (local and regional stakeholders).

We are committed to accelerating the transition to a sustainable organization. In addition to living labs and programs, we also draw on the intellectual energy, optimism, and enthusiasm of young people. That is why we have established an accessible Green Office to invite students (and staff) to share their ideas, and—just as importantly—to offer them opportunities for action.

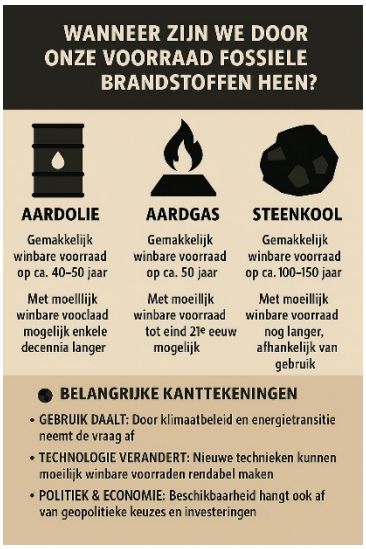
2.2. Intermezzo: A long-term, system-critical economic business case

The next major market shift will be 1.5 degrees

Climate change requires a long-term vision and approach. Although recent developments suggest that the long term may be shorter than we hoped or thought. The first signs of what we can expect in the long term are becoming visible, and when we zoom out, it becomes very clear how unsustainable our current system is. For the analysis below, we're using the long term without pinning ourselves to a specific year. But you don't need to be a fortune-teller to predict what the future holds if we don't make significant course corrections.

2.2.1. Energy:

If we continue extracting fossil fuels at this rate, we are expected to deplete easily accessible fossil reserves within 40–50 years. That may seem far off, but the students we are educating today will experience this during their working lives. Apart from the impact on global warming, and the fact that we desperately need fossil resources for solar panels and wind turbines, this has consequences for the affordability of energy. The effects of the depletion of fossil fuels will have major economic and geopolitical impacts even before reserves are fully exhausted, the contours of which are already becoming apparent. Fossil fuels will become unaffordable. Entities that have not made the transition (in time) to stable, reliable, and sufficiently available renewable energy sources will see their very survival threatened.



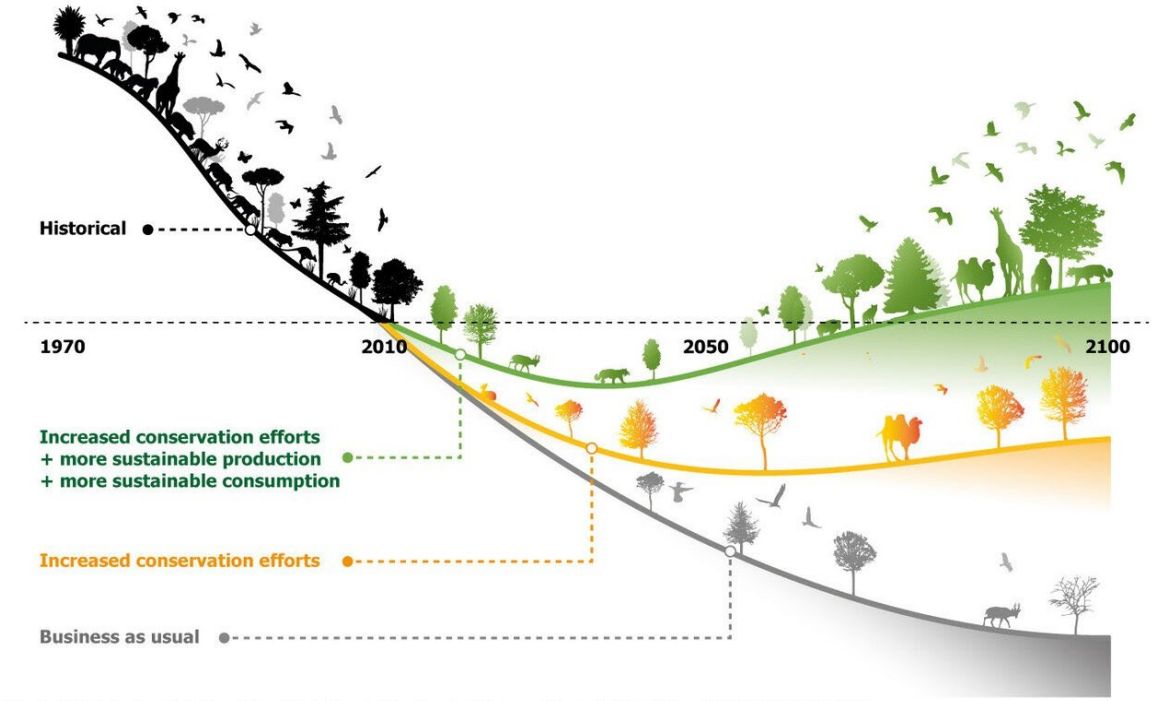
2.2.2. Biodiversity

Biodiversity is us. The collapse of ecosystems, of which humans are a part, is an existential threat that cannot be expressed in monetary terms. Ecosystems are complex networks in which individuals find it difficult to protect themselves against the impact of the system's collapse. Food production and clean drinking water depend entirely on a healthy ecosystem. For that reason alone, biodiversity loss should not be underestimated. Its financial impact is also enormous. In addition to the impact on individual organizations, macroeconomic analyses predict significant global economic losses as a result of the ongoing decline in biodiversity:

- *Global GDP at risk*: The World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates that more than half of total global GDP—approximately $44 trillion—is moderately to highly dependent on nature. The three sectors most dependent on nature—construction, agriculture, and the food and beverage industry—alone generate nearly $8 trillion in gross value added [Wellington Management].
- *Expected GDP decline*: The World Bank's 2021 report, The Economic Case for Nature, predicts a 2.3% decline in global GDP—equivalent to $2.7 trillion—by 2030 in a scenario of partial ecosystem collapse, compared to a baseline where the state of nature remains unchanged [BloombergNEF].

- *Agricultural losses*: The 2019 IPBES assessment highlighted that up to $577 billion in annual global crop yields is at risk due to the loss of pollinators [Wellington Management].
- *Costs of invasive species*: Invasive species, a major cause of biodiversity loss, caused global economic costs of more than $423 billion per year in 2019 [ECB].

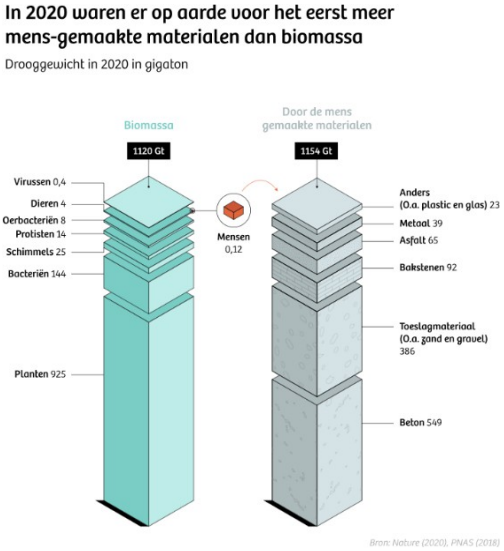
These figures underscore that the financial costs of biodiversity loss are not speculative. Nevertheless, the decline in biodiversity is already underway and is expected to increase dramatically. It poses a systemic threat to global economic stability and the financial resilience of organizations.



This artwork illustrates the main findings of the article, but does not intend to accurately represent its results (https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-2705-y)

To ensure that supply chains do not come under further pressure, it is essential to reverse the trend of biodiversity loss. This so-called *"Bending the Curve"* requires a broad range of measures and is vital for all species that depend on it, including humans.

2.2.3. *Circularity*



The same applies, more or less, to (construction) materials as to fossil fuels. Only a limited amount is available. In 2020, the world reached the point where the weight of all human-made material exceeded the total biomass of all plants, animals, insects, and organisms on Earth.

In the future, we will therefore have to “extract” our materials from man-made buildings, infrastructure, and “products.” Because manufacturing in the past was never guided by the principle of reusability principle, the reuse of raw materials is difficult and sometimes even impossible. Insurers and accountants are beginning to recognize this. Buildings whose materials are well-documented, detachable, and modular in design retain a residual material value. The consequence of this is that buildings no longer need to be depreciated to zero euros, but to their residual value. Parties that are the first to recognize this have an economic advantage over competitors.

2.2.4. *Climate Adaptation*

Because CO_2 takes 75 years to break down, the (increasing) effects of climate change will continue to be felt until 2100, even if CO_2 emissions were to stop completely right now. More and more areas are already being affected by a changing climate. Natural disasters such as wildfires, floods, land subsidence, mudslides, and crop failures are making assets (e.g., buildings) uninsurable. In the U.S., insurance is being canceled for an increasing number of properties, rendering them unsellable. In Europe, the ECB is introducing a climate factor as a surcharge for borrowers whose collateral is exposed to the effects of climate change.

The parties that are the first to recognize this and take measures to protect their assets will be more financially resilient.

2.3. What will we focus on

To steer toward sustainability, it is necessary to establish a focus. This applies both to the themes you are working on (your external impact) and to how well the organization is equipped to make progress on those themes (how you are organized internally). In this way, you can work efficiently toward your goals.

2.3.1. Double Materiality Analysis (DMA)

The primary purpose of a double materiality analysis (DMA) is to obtain a comprehensive picture of the relevant sustainability issues, so that an organization can report on them (for example, in the context of the CSRD) and make strategic decisions to manage risks and capitalize on opportunities. It helps organizations define their sustainability ambitions and priorities and be transparent about them to stakeholders. The UU has conducted and finalized a DMA. This has resulted in eleven themes.

Environmental	Social	Governmental
• Klimaatadaptatie en mitigatie	• Werkomstandigheden	• Onderwijscultuur en integriteit
• Energie	• Gelijke behandeling en kansen voor iedereen	• Dierenwelzijn
• Biodiversiteit en ecosystemen	• Informatiegerelateerde impact eindgebruikers	
• Circulariteit en afvalverwerking	• Sociale veiligheid	
	• Sociale inclusie eindgebruikers	

2.3.2. Maturity Readiness Assessment for Sustainability at UU

UU has conducted a sustainability maturity readiness assessment among a representative group of staff and students at UU (see Appendix 1).
Because this is the first year this assessment has been conducted, the group of respondents was relatively small (15 people). Nevertheless, the results provide a picture of the state of sustainability within UU. The results of this year's assessment can serve as a baseline for coming years.

The primary goal of a Sustainability Maturity Readiness Survey is to evaluate an organization's current performance and capabilities in the areas of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG). This assessment helps an organization gain insight into its position within its sustainability strategy and identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. It serves as both a baseline measurement and a compass. The main objectives are:

- *Insight into current status*: The assessment maps out the organization's maturity in various areas—such as processes, technology,

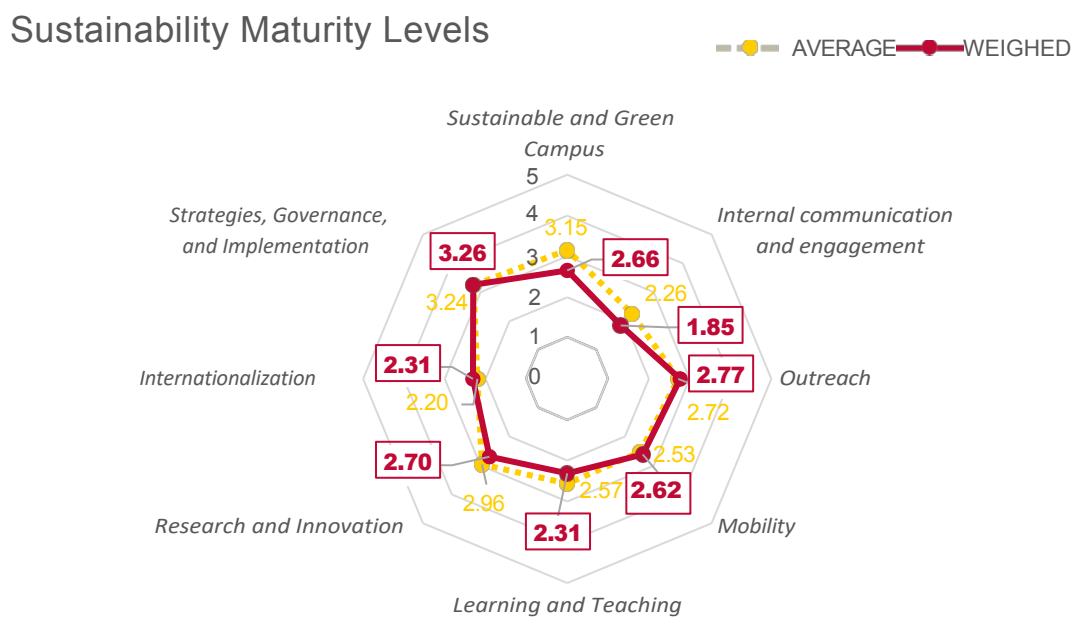
culture, leadership, and data. This helps us identify our strengths and areas needing improvement.

- *Determining strategic direction*: By understanding where we stand now, we can make more targeted plans for where we want to go as UU. The assessment helps formulate a realistic roadmap (see page 25 and beyond) and priorities.
- *Identifying areas for improvement*: The model exposes blind spots and shows where we can optimize. Think of inefficient processes, missing skills, or outdated technology.
- *Benchmarking and comparison*: We can compare UU with industry peers or best practices. This provides context for your position relative to others and helps in setting ambitious yet achievable goals.
- *Building buy-in*: By sharing the assessment with employees and stakeholders, we create a shared understanding of where we stand as an organization. This increases engagement in change initiatives.
- *Driving strategic decisions*: The insights from the assessment form the basis for strategic decision-making and help align sustainability efforts with the company's core objectives.
- *Benchmarking performance*: This allows organizations to compare their sustainability performance against industry standards and competitors, which helps in setting realistic goals.

Ultimately, a sustainability maturity assessment provides input for integrating sustainability into the university's core strategy and activities, and fosters a culture of continuous improvement.

2.3.3. Maturity

The purpose of a maturity assessment within a “maturity-readiness assessment” is to evaluate UU’s current capabilities and level of development in eight areas critical to sustainability. This helps an organization understand where it stands and lays the groundwork for future improvements and increasing its impact.



1. *Initial*: No formal strategy or document
2. *Managed*: Informal discussions or departmental-level documents
3. *Defined*: A formal strategy is being developed or is part of an overarching institutional strategy
4. *Quantitatively* Managed: A specific strategy for sustainable development is in place with clear targets
5. *Optimizing*: The sustainability strategy is fully integrated, regularly reviewed, and drives all institutional planning

Drivers	
Leadership Engagement	4.4
System-level policies and guidelines	4.4
European policy objectives, guidelines	4.1
Role in the wider community	4
Student Engagement/Initiatives	4
System-level benchmarking / use of indicators	4
Collaboration with industry	3.9
Staff Engagement	3.8
Target public funding	3.8
European funding	3.8
International treaties	3.5
Institutional Values	3.3
Efficiency across UU	3.3
Local and regional context	3.3

Impact/Benefits	
Stimulated research and innovation	2.4
Helped build reputation as a leader by setting an example	2.4
positive impact on partnerships	2.3
Real-life learning opportunities for students	2.1
Improved quality of life on campus	2
More attractive for recruiting staff and students	2
Increased likelihood of receiving funding in grants	2
Awareness and behavior Change in students	1.9
Awareness and behavior Change in staff	1.8
Positive impact on the surrounding community (outside UU)	1.8
Had economic benefits, saving some costs	1.75
Science-based policies at the local/regional level	1.6
Stimulated research and innovation	2.4
Helped build reputation as a leader by example	2.4

Barriers	
Lack of specific funding incentives	2.3
UU frameworks/regulations are not supportive	2.3
Coordination issues across the EU	2.2
General underfunding	2.1
Leadership is not supportive (enough)	2.0
Insufficient staff resources	1.9
There are activities, but not enough strategized	1.8
UU frameworks/regulations are not supportive	1.8
Lack of national policy support	1.8
No/not enough clearly defined targets/monitoring	1.7
Only a few staff members participate	1.7
Only a few students engage	1.7
Lack of interested partners	1.4
No real opportunities for engagement for students/staff	1.2
National higher education frameworks / regulations are not supportive	1.1

Drivers were scored on a 5-point scale:

1. *Not important*
2. *Slightly important*
3. *Moderately important*
4. *Important*
5. *Very important*

Impact/benefit was rated on a 3-point scale:

1. *Not yet, but expected to*
2. *To some extent*
3. *Strongly*

Barriers were scored on a 4-point scale (high score = high barrier):

1. *Not a barrier*
2. *Minor barrier*
3. *Moderate barrier*
4. *Major barrier*

2.3.3.1. Maturity-Readiness Conclusions

The combination of the data on Maturity (radar chart on page 16) and readiness in the form of Drivers, Benefits/Impact, and Barriers leads to the following main conclusions regarding the state of sustainability within the UU organization (For a detailed analysis of the data, see Appendix 1). Notable is the high to very high level of engagement among UU members regarding sustainability and the steps the UU is already taking in this area, which make it a frontrunner compared to other organizations. However, or perhaps precisely because of, this high level of engagement and knowledge on the subject, the general perception is that UU could do even more and achieve even greater results from further sustainability efforts within the organization. This leads to the following conclusions regarding areas of strength and areas for improvement:

1. *Strong recognition of drivers, weaker realization of impact*: The university clearly identifies key drivers for sustainability, particularly leadership and systemic policy. However, the actual impact and realized benefits are generally still moderate, indicating a gap between strategic intent and operational effectiveness.
2. *Internal barriers are the main obstacles*: The main barriers are internal and revolve around funding mechanisms, unsupportive internal frameworks/regulations, and coordination issues. External national frameworks are not seen as major obstacles.
3. *Funding is a critical bottleneck*: The consistent emergence of funding-related issues as both key drivers (e.g.,
   targeted public funding, European funding) and major barriers (e.g., lack of specific funding incentives, general underfunding) underscores that financial resources represent a crucial and unresolved challenge.
4. *Disconnect between community and economic impact*: Despite recognizing the importance of the community's role and effectiveness, the institution struggles to translate sustainability efforts into tangible economic benefits and/or a broader positive impact on the community.
5. *Engagement gap*: Although student and staff engagement are seen as key drivers, the actual impact on awareness and behavioral change remains too limited. Furthermore, a significant portion of staff and students are not engaged, indicating that there is potential to bridge this gap.

2.3.3.2. Maturity-Readiness Recommendations

1. *Align internal frameworks with strategic drivers*: Actively incorporate sustainability policy into UU's frameworks and regulations as an integral decision-making framework. This ensures that frameworks and policies actively support and facilitate sustainability, rather than being perceived as obstacles. This includes, among other things, integrating sustainability goals, streamlining processes, and removing bureaucratic obstacles.
2. *Address funding gaps strategically*: Develop a comprehensive strategy with corresponding long-term structural funding to secure and allocate resources for sustainability initiatives. This includes actively pursuing both internal and external funding opportunities (e.g., European funding) and demonstrating the economic benefits of sustainability to secure internal investments.
3. *Improve internal coordination*: Implement mechanisms to improve coordination within the university and ensure that sustainability initiatives are coherent and maximize their collective impact

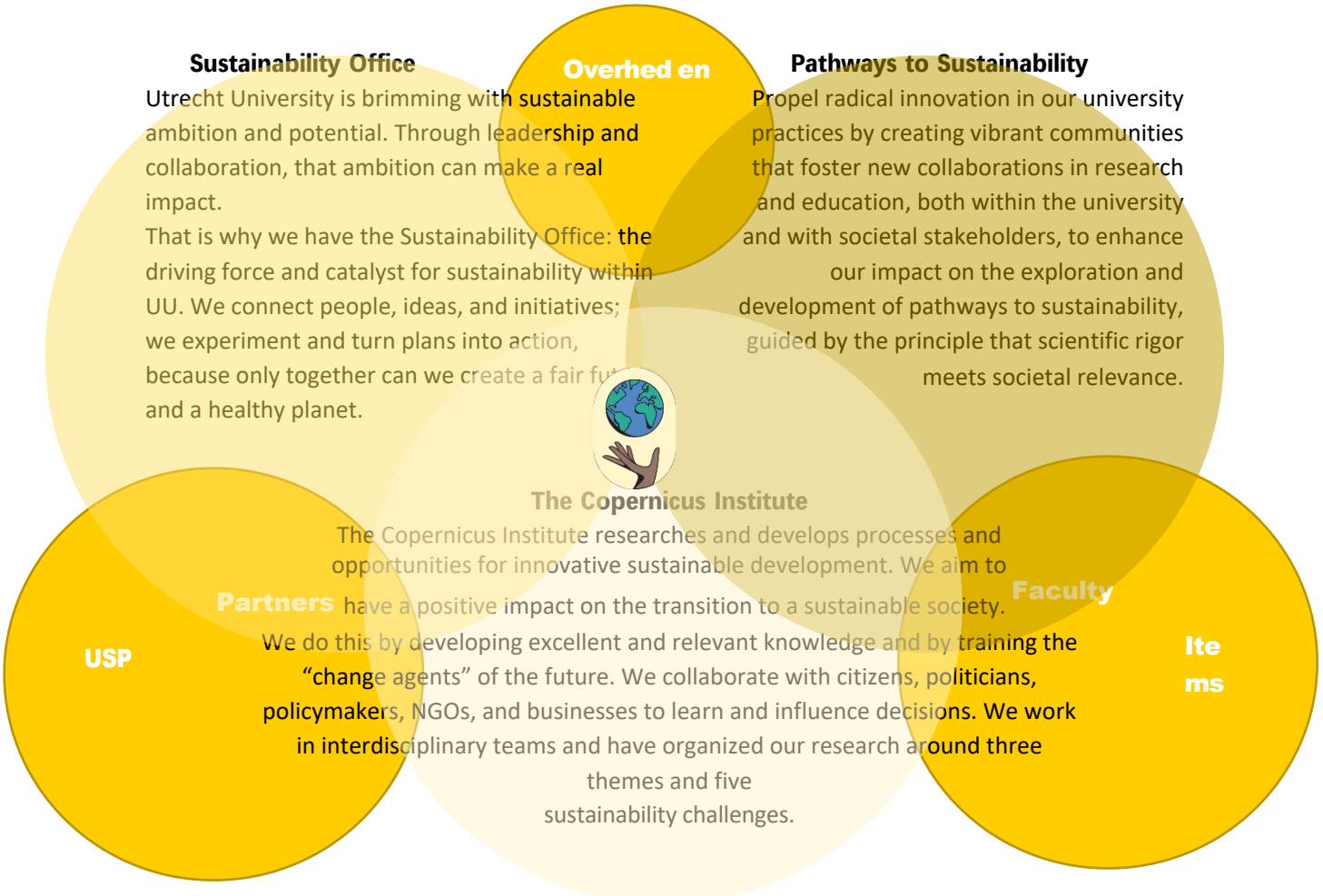
. The Sustainability Office will continue to serve as a connector between people, ideas, and initiatives. To fulfill this role even more effectively and strengthen ties with the faculties, further embedding and professionalization of the Green Teams is recommended.

4. *Translate leadership commitment into action*: Ensure that the recognized importance of leadership commitment translates into visible and effective support for sustainability initiatives, including resource allocation, policy enforcement, and active participation.
5. *Strengthen initiatives for social and economic impact*: Develop targeted programs and measurement methods to increase the university's positive impact on the surrounding community and derive economic benefits from sustainability efforts. This may include community collaboration, engagement with local policy, and internal efficiency projects with a clear ROI.
6. *Increase the effectiveness of engagement*: While opportunities for engagement exist, focus on making them more attractive and effective to increase participation and translate it into tangible awareness and behavioral change among students and staff. This may include better communication, incentives, and integration into academic and operational activities.

2.4. Enablers: What resources and skills will we use

2.4.1. Our people, our knowledge

Our people are our most important enablers. As a knowledge institute, we are uniquely positioned to tackle the complex issues of climate change and biodiversity restoration with a scientific foundation. UU's sustainability policy is a subject of scientific inquiry. Science provides us with new insights for our sustainability policy. This symbiosis of operations, research, and education helps raise awareness, stay committed to long-term goals, and accelerate the transition. For this symbiosis, UU-wide collaboration is being sought. Three units are already in contact with each other on this matter and have made advancing sustainability within UU their ambition. In the coming years, we will seek to connect with all other sustainability scientists.



2.4.2. *Our assets*

Our ‘Human Capital’ is our most important asset. We acquire, share, and disseminate knowledge through our Green Office among engaged students and enthusiastic Green Teams. Within our communities, there is a growing awareness that sustainability begins with our own behavior. Through our student and staff communities, we make an impact by setting a good example that others follow.

The UU also has assets (buildings, sites, partnerships) where it can test its sustainable, innovative ideas through living labs (see page 9 – strategic intent).

As Utrecht University, we practice what we teach

2.4.3. *Frameworks*

2.4.3.1. *Double Materiality Analysis*

Using the Double Materiality Analysis (DMA), UU has identified 11 core sustainability themes. The current Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) themes were established by UU in January 2025 and will guide the university through 2030.

Ecological	**Social**	**Governance**
Energy *Contributing to the energy transition by reducing our energy consumption, increasing the share of renewable energy in our energy mix, and promoting energy efficiency.*	***Working Conditions*** *Creating a safe and healthy work environment for our employees with a focus on physical and mental well-being, shaped by social dialogue, work-life balance, and freedom of association.*	***Educational culture and integrity*** *Creating a future-proof educational culture focused on quality and innovation, in which UU is committed to scientific integrity and ethically responsible choices in research.*

Biodiversity & Ecosystems *Contributing to the enhancement of biodiversity and water quality in the Netherlands by increasing biodiversity locally on our own grounds. Contributing to reducing the biodiversity footprint in UU's supply chains.*	***Equal treatment and opportunities for everyone*** *Enriching the academic debate through staff diversity, ensuring everyone has equal opportunities. Recognizing and valuing all staff, reducing individual workloads, and fostering a more balanced and complementary dynamic within teams.*	***Animal welfare*** *Committing to the sustainable coexistence of animals and humans, in which animal welfare represents an intrinsic value. We prioritize animal welfare in our education, research, and operations, and contribute to internal and external dialogue.*
Circularity and waste management *Preserving the value of products, materials, and other resources, thereby reducing environmental impact, minimizing waste, and increasing efficiency during production and consumption.*	***Information-related impact on end users*** *Sharing valuable knowledge, through open science, applied by researchers, policymakers, the business community, and social institutions in our country and elsewhere. In addition, we handle the personal data of everyone who works with us, studies or participates in research.*	
Climate adaptation and mitigation *Adapting as a university to current and expected climate change and its consequences, while contributing to its mitigation by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.*	***Social Safety*** *Creating a socially safe university for all students and staff. Treating one another with respect and setting boundaries to prevent the continuation and normalization of unwanted behavior as much as possible.*	
	Social inclusion of end-users *Committing to innovative, flexible, and future-proof high-quality education where everyone is welcome and has the opportunity to successfully complete their studies, with UU striving to prevent students and staff from facing racism and discrimination.*	

The focus of this Strategic Sustainability Execution Plan is on the core ecological themes. Next year, the social and governance themes will be addressed. This strategy will be updated once these themes have been further developed.

3. Execution

Utrecht University (UU) is not at the beginning of its sustainability journey. We are building on a solid foundation of policies, projects, and initiatives that have been contributing to a future-proof campus and organization for years. At the same time, the sustainability challenges we face are becoming increasingly complex. They influence one another, are interdependent, and require choices, coherence, and direction. Moreover, time is of the essence: many of our ambitions are focused on 2030, and that moment is fast approaching.
With this implementation plan, we are taking the next step: connecting existing strengths to targeted choices for the future. In this way, we are working together toward a sustainable university—ambitious, realistic, and steadfastly on course toward 2030.

3.1. Objectives and initiatives: what do we need to do?

3.1.1. Strategic (ecological) sustainability themes

As explained in Chapter 1 (on page 9), the UU's[1]ecological sustainability themes are:

- *Energy*: Contributing to the energy transition by reducing energy consumption and increasing our efficiency and the share of renewable energy in our energy mix.
- *Biodiversity:* Contributing to the enhancement of biodiversity and water quality in the Netherlands by increasing biodiversity locally on our own grounds. Contributing to reducing the biodiversity footprint in UU's supply chain.
- *Circularity*: Preserving the value of products, materials, and other resources, thereby reducing environmental impact, minimizing waste, and increasing efficiency during production and consumption.
- *Climate Adaptation and Mitigation*: Adapting as a university to current and anticipated climate change and its consequences, while contributing to mitigation by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

[1] As established by the Executive Board in early 2025, based on a Double Materiality Analysis (DMA) conducted, as previously described in Chapter 2 on page 23.

At the USP, at University College, and in our downtown buildings, we are actively working on these strategic themes by developing, researching, and improving them in practice. Our campuses serve as living laboratories in this regard: an environment where knowledge, practice, and experimentation come together naturally, where interdisciplinary collaboration is central, and where innovation arises through doing, testing, and learning. We do this with the active involvement of *Pathways to Sustainability*[2], the University of Utrecht's strategic theme, where research into and education on sustainability set the agenda.

A selection of what we're already doing

For several years now, the Sustainability Plan for Operations (DPB) has been a key foundation of our sustainable operations. Thanks to the DPB, we have achieved a great deal: clear plans, implementation goals, commitment, and actions on a wide range of sustainability topics. As an organization, we have become increasingly professional in shaping and giving substance to sustainability. We see the impact of this in numerous initiatives:

- *We are working on sustainable energy generation and energy conservation. These efforts are paying off: since 2017, energy consumption has already dropped by 26%, an average savings of 3% per year.*
- *The "Future-Proof Buildings" and "Future-Proof Area" Ambition Documents set out the basic principles for climate adaptation, greening, water management, and sustainable area development.*
- *Through the Tree Plan, the Green-Blue Framework, and the Biodiversity Program, we are enhancing biodiversity, increasing water retention capacity, and mitigating heat stress.*
- *We have launched initiatives to make our laboratories more sustainable, promote sustainable mobility, and consolidate logistics flows.*
- *Through the Zero Waste program, we have made a structural commitment to waste reduction and reuse.*
- *In addition, sustainability is becoming increasingly embedded in our organizational processes, from sustainable procurement to explicit requirements in catering contracts. And we actively involve employees in this transition, including through campaigns, roadshows, and awareness initiatives.*

So, a lot is already happening at UU in the area of sustainability. A programmatic approach helps us make structured and efficient progress and steer toward achieving our goals. You can read about what that programmatic approach looks like below.

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[2] Pathways to Sustainability

3.1.2. Transition Pathways

For each of our ecological sustainability themes, we have established transition pathways that provide a clear picture of where we are working toward by 2030 and what steps we are taking along the way. The building blocks for these transition pathways are largely in place and are already being implemented in part, in the Sustainability Plan for Operations, in existing ambition documents, plans, and policies, and in all our efforts to date. The ambitions and objectives from these documents are well integrated into the transition pathways. These transition pathways are further elaborated in Appendices 1 through 5.

3.1.3. Embedding within UU

Because sustainability is a strategic theme for UU, administrative anchoring of (progress toward) making UU more sustainable is necessary.

Every six months, progress is reported to the Executive Board, the course of all programs is monitored, and bottlenecks or obstacles that could delay implementation are addressed and resolved where possible.

To ensure the implementation of the UU's transition pathways across the university, stakeholder involvement is embedded as part of the decision-making process regarding project plans. This ensures alignment of the impact on the relevant departments or services and the identification of interdisciplinary opportunities. This secures the necessary support for the sustainability transition at the departmental level.

The Sustainability Office ensures that the five ecological programs are accountable for the progress of the transition pathways. We explain how the Sustainability Office fulfills this role in section 3.3.

3.1.4. Portfolio Management

The portfolio board has been established to enable programmatic steering of UU's strategic themes. Program management involves the coordinated steering of multiple interrelated projects and activities to achieve a broader strategic goal or change.

Whereas project management focuses primarily on delivering a concrete result within the constraints of time, budget, and scope, program management focuses on achieving coherent impacts, benefits, and long-term value. It includes, among other things, prioritization, governance, stakeholder management, risk management, progress monitoring, and ensuring coherence between projects.

For this reason, the five ecological programs in this implementation plan align well with UU's portfolio management. Each program has a transition path (see

attachments). These transition paths form the basis for the (coherent) project plans to make UU more sustainable.

3.1.5. Funding

3.1.5.1. Funding for program management:

Each transition path (see appendix) requires an annual base budget. This budget is intended to make sustainability an integral part of UU's operations. The programs ensure that existing, already established budgets align with the program objectives, are accompanied by a feasible schedule, and include a clear decision-making framework for the set sustainability goals. The necessary budget will be requested from the Executive Board via portfolio management.

3.1.5.2. Funding for the implementation of the sustainability goals:

The financing and implementation of the programs take place within the line organization; therefore, the (implementation) measures are covered by the specific budgets already established by the administration, such as land development (GREX), the Strategic Housing Plan (SHP), and Management & Maintenance Resources (MJOP). Therefore, no additional funding will be requested to achieve the sustainability goals, as this has—in principle—already been provided for. Through program management, it will become clear which sustainability goals can be implemented, to what extent, when, and from which operational funds.

This approach ensures that ecological sustainability goals are systematically incorporated into investment decisions and that sustainability remains a fully-fledged and mandatory component of university projects, even in times of financial pressure.

In addition, we actively pursue opportunities to attract external funding, including through grants, to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of our sustainability goals.

3.1.6. Legislation

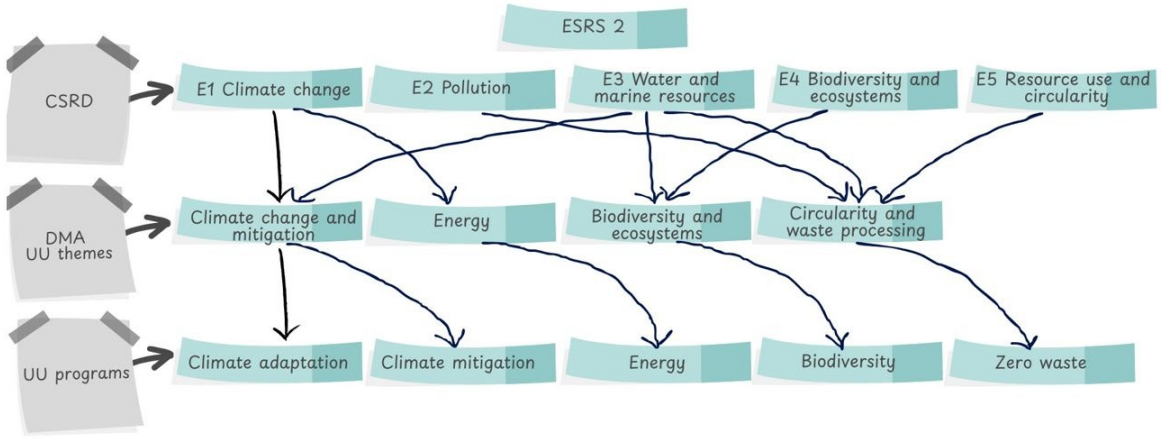
The implementation of the transition pathways takes place within the framework of current and future laws and regulations in the field of sustainability, including energy, climate, circularity, and waste. These laws and regulations will be gradually tightened in the coming years and constitute a minimum requirement for all projects. Where possible and appropriate, we also utilize external assessment and certification, such as BREEAM-NL, to ensure the ambitions of the transition pathways are met and to make the implementation of sustainability measures demonstrable and verifiable.

3.2. Strategic framework, monitoring, and reporting

3.2.1. From Dual Materiality Analysis to Programs

The University commissioned and formally adopted a Dual Materiality Analysis (DMA). A Dual Materiality Analysis (DMA) is a method by which an organization determines which sustainability topics are most relevant to report on. “Dual” means that two perspectives are considered: impact materiality—that is, the organization’s effects on people, the environment, and society—and financial materiality—that is, how sustainability issues can affect the organization’s financial position, performance, or future viability.

The DMA forms the basis for determining which topics should be included in the sustainability report. UU’s DMA identifies four ecological themes. These DMA themes have been translated into five programs to make them manageable and to ensure they are effectively integrated within the organization.



3.2.2. Monitoring and reporting: CSRD

The European Green Deal aims to make the EU climate-neutral by 2050 through a greener economy and society. In addition to legislation such as the European Climate Law, it also includes initiatives such as the Action Plan on Sustainable Finance, the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) for transparent reporting on sustainability. As UU, we will align our work with the CSRD. This European framework is already mandatory for companies, but not yet for research institutions. It presents a unique opportunity to strengthen internal monitoring, policies, and actions related to sustainability. Aligning with the CSRD leads to:

- *Increased Transparency*: Promotes clear and standardized reporting on sustainability.
- *Enhanced Trust Among Students, Partners, and Staff*: Strengthens relationships with regulators, clients, and policymakers by demonstrating commitment to sustainability.
- *Better Risk Management*: Identifies and addresses environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risks and opportunities.
- *Competitive Advantage*: Positions the organization as a leader in sustainability, attracting eco-conscious students and partners.
- *Regulatory Compliance*: Ensures alignment with EU regulations, thereby avoiding fines and legal risks.
- *Informed Decision-Making*: Provides data-driven insights to improve long-term strategies and performance.

The framework of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the ESRS form the basis for our data collection and reporting and support us in further professionalizing our reporting on sustainability topics. The CSRD states that you must report; the ESRS specifies what and how you must report.
We produce an annual (integrated) sustainability report, to which we refer in the sustainability section of the UU Annual Report.

Within the existing organizational structure, the Sustainability Office is responsible for preparing the annual sustainability report, drafted in line with the CSRD. Once reporting on sustainability goals has been formalized, this reporting responsibility and implementation will be transferred to the Finance, Control, and Administration (FCA) department. This will occur no earlier than 2030. If the CSRD also becomes mandatory for knowledge institutions, the external audit requirement will be established at that time.

For the annual sustainability report, KPIs and data points directly derived from the CSRD will be used. These indicators will be tracked at the operational level to provide insight into whether we are on track toward the established goals and where additional interventions are needed. Additionally, we aim to consolidate our data collection and monitoring into a single clear, cohesive environment.

3.3. Programmatic approach to sustainability within the organization

Utrecht University is brimming with sustainable ambitions and potential. Coordination and collaboration are needed to truly realize those ambitions and make an impact. The Sustainability Office is equipped to provide this central coordination. The Sustainability Office facilitates, connects, and mobilizes sustainability activities through three core roles:

- Connecting: Bringing together people, ideas, and organizations.
- Accelerate: Setting plans in motion and giving direction to ambitions.
- Facilitate: Supporting and enabling sustainable results.

It is crucial to make a clear distinction between the role of the Sustainability Office and that of the line organization. The Sustainability Office acts as a process owner but is explicitly not a policy or implementation department.

- *Not a policy department*: The Sustainability Office does not formulate formal policy itself, but identifies where policy is lacking or needs revision to achieve sustainability goals. Actual policy-making lies with departments such as Advisory (SBAE), with the Sustainability Office fulfilling an advisory and agenda-setting role.
- *Not an implementation department*: The operational realization of sustainability goals (such as technical modifications to buildings, procurement decisions, or logistics processes) falls within the line organization. The Sustainability Office acts as an “incubator,” knowledge provider, and guardian of long-term sustainability goals: we initiate new projects and offer temporary support until an initiative is mature enough to be integrated into the regular organizational structure.

At its core, this is a task of strategic change management, focused on the transition of individuals, teams, and the entire organization toward a sustainable future.
The strength of the Sustainability Office lies in the human aspect: inspiring and connecting teams, building communities, contributing specialized knowledge, and guiding the cultural transition necessary for sustainability.

Characteristic	*Sustainable transition (SO Role)*	*Policy implementation (Policy Role)*
Primary motivation	Internal vision, strategic ambitions, societal transition	External regulations, legal obligations, risk mitigation
Core focus	People, culture, mindset, support	Processes, systems, technical compliance, procedures
Key challenge	Increasing enthusiasm, changing ingrained behavior	Ensuring accurate interpretation of rules and timely implementation
Success indicator	High acceptance rate, cultural alignment, transition achieved	No violations, successful audits, procedural efficiency
Leadership role	Inspiring, connecting, building, and maintaining communities, Cultural champions	Enforcing standards, sponsoring procedural updates

The Sustainability Office operates in a complex environment and serves as the connecting link between various internal and external stakeholders. To achieve sustainability goals, the Sustainability Office works closely with partners, both across the entire university and beyond:

3.3.1. Internal Collaboration Partners

- *Faculties and Research (Pathways to Sustainability)*: The Sustainability Office bridges the gap between scientific knowledge and practice. Together with our own researchers and faculty, sustainability is structurally embedded in our organization—in our operations, in education, and in shaping the campus as a "Living Lab" for scientific research.
- *Departments and Services (Line Organization)*: The Sustainability Office works closely with departments such as Campus & Facilities (C&F), ITS, and HR. The focus here is on translating strategic goals into concrete actions in operations, with line responsibility for implementation remaining with the relevant departments.
- Students and Staff: The Sustainability Office actively involves the university community in the transition. The Sustainability Office provides a platform for bottom-up initiatives and ensures that the voices of students and staff are heard in policy-making.

3.3.2. The Sustainability Office's coordinating role in the SSEP

The SSEP is not a departmental plan of the Sustainability Office, but an implementation plan developed by and to be carried out by UU, which concretely realizes the ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan 2030. The Sustainability Office guides this change: providing structured guidance to the organization toward a sustainable future. The role of the Sustainability Office in the development and implementation of the SSEP is that of architect and process guardian, not that of implementer. Implementation is assigned to the line management and is further explained in chapters 4 through 8. This creates a clear distinction between the various roles and tasks:

- *Goals versus Implementation*: The Sustainability Office develops the sustainable goals and KPIs (the course) within the SSEP. The operational responsibility for achieving these goals lies with the program managers in the line organization (such as within C&F).
- *Driving Integrated Themes*: The Sustainability Office coordinates the eleven themes from the Double Materiality Analysis (DMA). While the current focus is on the environmental themes within C&F, the Sustainability Office is increasingly putting social and governance themes (ESG) on the agenda in collaboration with HR and Administrative Affairs.
- *Connecting Education and Research*: The Sustainability Office serves as a link between operational management and the academic core. The Sustainability Office collaborates with *Pathways to Sustainability* and the SO&O Executive Board to structurally embed sustainability in research and education.
- *Monitoring and Support*: The Sustainability Office provides substantive support and monitors overall progress. Together with the relevant decision-makers (representatives from HR, ITS, C&F, Pathways, and others), the long-term focus is ensured, and the Executive Board is advised on the direction to take.

3.3.3. Communication Strategy

UU has set ambitious goals in the areas of energy, biodiversity, circularity, climate adaptation, and climate mitigation. Achieving these goals requires not only technical and policy measures, but also a campus community that is aware of these issues, becomes engaged, and is willing to adapt. Communication and awareness are therefore not merely supporting side issues, but prerequisites for success. We use communication strategically to make sustainable choices visible, understandable, attractive, and accessible to the entire university.

3.3.3.1. Our Vision for the Future: Sustainability is visible, tangible, and self-evident both within and outside Utrecht University

Staff and students recognize the role they can play, feel part of a growing community, and actively contribute to our university's sustainable transition. Communication is a continuously operating system in this process. It is not just about broadcasting, but about connecting, activating, and strengthening.

3.3.3.2. Communication Goals

1. *Raise awareness:* Ensure that students, staff, and campus users know *what* UU is doing within its sustainability programs, *why* this is important, and *how* it relates to their own daily lives.
2. *Fostering engagement:* Helping people experience that sustainability is part of the UU's identity and of their own daily actions. In this way, sustainability becomes part of our culture.
3. *Activate and change behavior:* Encourage the community to get involved through concrete action plans, accessible activities, and positive examples—moving from awareness to engagement to participation.
4. *Building a sustainable (campus) community:* A growing movement of students, staff, and partners who feel connected to the sustainability goals, share knowledge, and take the initiative themselves.
5. *Visibility and external branding*: Showcasing what UU is doing in the field of sustainability by actively sharing achievements, inspiring projects, and collaborations with the outside world.

3.3.3.3. Target groups

Primary target groups	Secondary target groups	Specific key groups
Staff (researchers, faculty, administrative staff)	External partners & suppliers	Green Teams UBD & faculties
Students	Visitors & campus users	Early adopters / sustainability ambassadors
	City/region of Utrecht	Student initiatives

We recognize that not everyone finds every topic or initiative equally relevant. That is why we take a differentiated approach, in which we provide everyone with basic information and, where possible, involve or engage them.

3.3.3.4. Approach – two communication channels

1. Inform – storytelling & visibility

Goal: to raise awareness and connect it to personal and social significance. We make

sustainability development visible, understandable, and inspiring.
Communication focuses on progress, results, impact, and the story behind the measures. We show the "why" and the "what's in it for me." We target audiences both within and outside UU.

Resources and channels

- Sustainability Office news update (regular frequency, continuous visibility)
- website & intranet with KPI progress, visualizations, and results
- sustainability lunches, themed sessions, campus stories & showcases
- Highlighting pilots and physical initiatives on campus
- Storytelling through students, staff, and living labs

Desired outcome

- Sustainability goals become widely known and recognized
- sustainability becomes visible in language, behavior, and decision-making
- A shared baseline of knowledge and understanding across the entire organization

2. Community building – engaging and activating

Goal: Transforming engagement into participation and behavioral change.

We are building an open, learning community where people can contribute ideas, join the conversation, and get involved. The campus serves as a living laboratory for behavior, innovation, and co-creation.

We work along the participation ladder (from informing to co-decision-making) so that everyone can get involved in a way that suits them:

- Informing: news updates, intranet, online dashboards, lunch sessions
- Consultation: surveys, dialogue sessions, stakeholder sessions, feedback rounds
- Co-production / contributing ideas: working sessions, living labs, test groups
- Co-decision-making: Green Teams UBD & faculties on themes/measures

Behavioral interventions we use

- Social pressure: highlighting what others are already doing (“this is how we do it here”)
- Nudging: making it easy to participate, lowering barriers
- Positive emotion: stimulating pride, curiosity, ownership, and enjoyment

Results development per strategic theme

Each program has a specific focus when it comes to communication and awareness.
We integrate this into our overall communication strategy and approach.

- Energy: behavioral change for energy savings
- Biodiversity: awareness & engagement as impact amplifiers
- Circularity: encouraging circular behavior through campaigns and nudges
- Climate mitigation: influencing mobility, data usage, and consumption behavior
- Climate adaptation: contributing ideas & co-design

Desired results

- A growing and recognizable sustainability community
- more co-creation activities instead of just top-down approaches
- Behavioral change through participation, ownership, and group norms
- Sustainability becomes a natural part of daily choices

4. From ambition to impact

This implementation plan establishes a coherent framework for realizing our sustainability ambitions. The *purpose* and *strategy* guide the choices we make; the implementation structure and the five transition paths translate this direction into measurable goals, initiatives, and responsibilities. This explicitly positions sustainability as an integral part of organizational and decision-making processes.

Implementation requires continuous monitoring of progress, coherence, and impact. Monitoring, reporting, and decision-making are therefore structurally embedded within the described governance framework. This provides the board and management with a basis for timely adjustments and, where necessary, for accelerating, delaying, or reprioritizing ambitions, while maintaining consistency with strategic goals and external obligations.

The realization of this plan is not solely an implementation issue, but also a change initiative for the organization. The professionalization approach supports the strengthening of ownership, competencies, and collaboration, so that sustainability is firmly embedded in policy, implementation, and culture.

This implementation plan is therefore not an endpoint, but a shared starting point. It offers both direction and flexibility: direction to stay on course, and flexibility to respond to new insights and developments. In this way, we are working step by step toward sustainable impact, with clear choices, transparent accountability, and shared responsibility.

APPENDIX 1 - Energy Transition Path

The implementation of this transition path is primarily the responsibility of the Energy department of Campus and Facilities and is primarily funded from the resources earmarked for this purpose in the SHP.

I Our vision for the future: a sustainable energy supply

Utrecht University is working toward a future in which our energy supply is affordable, reliable, and fully sustainable. Both on campus and in our downtown buildings, we are transforming our locations into green, future-proof environments where science, innovation, and technology converge. We are investing in smart solutions and clean energy sources, transforming Utrecht Science Park (USP) and our downtown buildings into open living labs—places where students, researchers, and partners collaborate, experiment, and learn.
By systematically reducing energy consumption, phasing out fossil fuels, and continuously innovating, we minimize our impact on the environment and contribute to a carbon-neutral future.

II Our Impact

Our efforts focus on three areas where we, as UU, can make an impact:

6 *Reducing our energy demand*: We are systematically reducing the energy consumption of our buildings and facilities by improving the performance of our assets.
7 *Increasing our supply of renewable energy*: We are expanding the share of locally generated renewable energy so that we can increasingly meet our own demand. In this way, we are building a robust and climate-neutral energy supply.
8 *Increasing our agility*: We are strengthening the importance of energy within the organization.

III Our ambition

By 2030, UU will have a carbon-neutral energy supply, and by 2035, we will operate entirely without natural gas. We will no longer waste energy, and all the energy we use will be sustainably generated and, as much as possible, locally, within or near the USP. Our historic buildings in the city center will have the highest achievable energy rating, while our campuses will function as living labs where innovative

solutions are immediately implemented and shared.

IV Goals and Approach

IV.1 Reducing our energy demand

2030 Goal: We will reduce our energy consumption by 3% per year.

Approach:

- We use more efficient technology for heating and cooling our buildings, where possible.
- We will better align supply and demand by expanding our EMS to include a link to the GBS and explore how we can make this system operate on a regional basis, enabling energy exchange with regional partners.
- Laboratories are working to obtain (at least a bronze) LEAF certification, which helps save energy, among other things.
- We are working to reduce the energy consumption of our (research) equipment, including by encouraging research groups to purchase more energy-efficient research equipment.
- We implement all energy-saving measures, with a payback period of 7 years, in line with the customized agreement with the Regional Implementation Service.
- We optimize the energy performance of energy assets and buildings through the analysis of energy data.

IV.2 Increasing our sustainable energy supply

Goal 2035: By 2035, Utrecht University will be completely natural gas-free, and 100% of our energy will be generated sustainably (of which at least 30% locally).

Approach:

- We are adopting a prioritization framework for our energy supply, with our own CO2-free energy having the highest priority.
- We will increase our grid connection to the public grid, after resolving congestion, so that our own fossil fuel-based generation is no longer necessary.
- We are exploring ways to make the district heating network more sustainable through the use of High-Temperature Storage in combination with high-temperature heat pumps and high-temperature buffers.

- We are installing a battery to store renewable energy and manage power peaks.
- We are providing transparency into energy consumption by installing energy meters and establishing an organizational structure to work with the data.
- We are continuing discussions regarding regulatory barriers to installing a wind turbine on campus.

IV.3 Increasing our agility

Goal 2030: The organization has both the staffing and the structures in place and is agile in a constantly changing energy landscape.

Approach:

- We are implementing an energy management system to systematically focus on energy and reduce the organization's energy consumption, but above all to maintain and/or improve the energy performance achieved.
- We will develop an energy plan and set concrete targets for the energy performance of our energy supply.
- We appoint a management representative to carry out energy management on behalf of the management.

V Milestones

2026	Energy Plan '26–'29 completed and thermal energy storage policy updated
2026	Adoption and implementation of the prioritization framework for sustainable energy supply
2026	Implementation of an energy system for data-driven building optimization
2026	Implementation of an energy management system
2026	Start of operations at the Bunnik solar park
2026	Battery commissioning
2027	Connection to 10 kV grid
2028	Decommissioning of the Kruyt building (major energy consumer)
2030	All UU laboratories have a (minimum bronze) LEAF certificate
2032	Decommissioning of the Androculus building (major energy consumer)

APPENDIX 2 – Transition Pathway for Biodiversity and Ecosystems

The implementation of this transition path is primarily the responsibility of the Area Development Department of Campus and Facilities and is primarily funded from the funds earmarked for this purpose in the (yet to be established) land development budget.

I Our vision for the future: A future in which people and nature reinforce each other

Imagine a world where nature is everywhere: in green cities and neighborhoods and landscapes full of diversity. The university campus is also part of that living world—a place where you cycle past singing birds, where green roofs collect rainwater, and students have lunch among blooming flowers. Utrecht University (UU) is full of life: a place where nature, knowledge, and people grow together.

Biodiversity forms the basis of all life. Healthy ecosystems provide us with food, raw materials, and medicines; purify water and air; contribute to our health and well-being; pollinate crops; keep soils fertile; and help maintain climate balance. That is why there is a growing awareness that working with nature is the key. By carefully managing land use and materials on campus and in our supply chains, promoting sustainable agriculture, reducing pollution, and mitigating the effects of climate change, we can restore ecosystems and create a healthy, equitable living environment—for ourselves, for the species we share our world with, and for future generations.

II Our Impact

The UU is committed to a future in which people and nature reinforce each other. We recognize that our activities—on campus and beyond—affect biodiversity. Our efforts therefore focus on three areas where we, as the UU, can make an impact:

9 *Reducing our biodiversity footprint*: We highlight the global impact of our use of materials and products and work toward more sustainable supply chains. In doing so, we contribute to reversing global biodiversity loss, in line with international agreements.
10 *Strengthening and restoring biodiversity*: By designing and managing the USP in a nature-inclusive way, we improve biodiversity, water quality, soil life, and

climate resilience on campus. In this way, we contribute to the restoration of the Dutch cultural landscape, in line with the Landscape Action Plan of the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Restoration.

11 *Raising awareness*: We inspire students, staff, and partners to contribute—on campus, in education and research, and beyond. By connecting knowledge with practice, we increase our societal impact and strengthen the movement for biodiversity restoration.

In doing so, we align with international ambitions for nature restoration, such as the Global Biodiversity Framework (agreed upon during the biodiversity conferences in Kunming and Montreal) and the European Biodiversity Strategy. We have been a partner of the Delta Plan for Biodiversity Restoration since 2020 and part of the Nature Positive Universities network since 2025.
With the campus as a living laboratory—and as part of the regional ecological framework—we demonstrate how knowledge, research, and practice contribute to strengthening and restoring biodiversity.

III Our ambition

UU is creating a livable, resilient, and biodiverse campus managed in a nature-inclusive way. At the same time, we are reducing our global biodiversity footprint and leveraging our knowledge and partnerships to develop and share solutions. Students, staff, and partners are actively involved, recognize the importance of biodiversity, and experience biodiversity as a visible and integral part of education, research, and operations.

IV Goals and approach

IV.1 Reducing our footprint

Goal '30: By '30, UU will have reduced its biodiversity footprint by 35% (compared to 2024)

Approach:

- Starting in 2025, we will calculate a biodiversity footprint annually to monitor the effects of our activities, including those in our supply chains.
- We will initiate activities that reduce UU's biodiversity footprint, such as reducing (fossil) energy use and procurement (see also Energy Transition Path), sustainable procurement, reusing items, collaborating with suppliers and partners, and making our laboratories more sustainable to achieve at least

bronze LEAF certification, a more sustainable catering menu, and reduced printing.

IV.2 Strengthening and restoring biodiversity

2030 Goal: By 2028 at the latest, we will have created 70 hectares of blue-green infrastructure (20% USP) and seeded 30 hectares of salad buffet (20% Tolakker meadows). We will improve the habitat of twenty indicator species so that they can permanently establish themselves on campus by 2035 at the latest.[3]

Approach:

- Biodiversity will be firmly embedded in our policies, and we will monitor the measures. We will ensure knowledge sharing within our operations and collaboration with local partners.
- We factor biodiversity interests into decision-making, supported by advice from the Biodiversity Council and plans for species and their habitats.
- We are implementing design and management measures to enhance biodiversity at the USP and improve the quality of green spaces by creating a more small-scale landscape and by further converting and managing roadside verges and grassy areas in an ecologically sound manner. We are creating two ecological corridor zones, thereby increasing the area of shrubbery, hedges, ponds, nature-friendly banks, and ecologically managed grasslands.
- We actively enhance biodiversity in all our construction projects (new construction and renovation) by fully applying nature-inclusive principles and BREEAM guidelines, building on sites with low ecological value, preventing ecological damage, and integrating nature into and around our buildings through greenery, ecological measures, and space for native species, among other things.
- We are committed to further enhancing the sustainability of the farm on campus, including by sowing herb-rich grassland for the cows (salad buffet) and developing a living lab for regenerative agriculture where nature (restoration) and livestock farming go hand in hand.

IV.3 Raising Awareness

Goal 2030: Biodiversity is visibly embedded in the thinking and actions of UU. Students, staff, alumni, and partners recognize the importance of biodiversity, are broadly engaged, and actively contribute to solutions. The university is

[3] Because indicator species place high demands on their habitat, their presence indicates that an area is healthy enough to support many other species as well.

serve as an inspiring example of working on biodiversity at the regional, national, and international levels.

Approach:

- We foster an active community of students and staff engaged in biodiversity and raise awareness through education, events, and activities such as nature workdays, the Biodiversity Challenge, and the International Day for Biological Diversity.
- We share knowledge, offer practical solutions, and develop *best practices* that are widely disseminated, so that our efforts are not only visible on campus but also contribute to a broader social movement.

V Milestones

2025	First biodiversity footprint of Utrecht University (first university in the Netherlands)
2025	UU joins the Nature Positive Universities network
2026	“Get to know the nature around you”: Biodiversity activities on the agenda of the UU’s 390th Anniversary Lustrum
2026	Schoolyard safari for elementary schools in collaboration with Wageningen University & Research (WUR) and the science hub
2027	Completion of the second ecological corridor
2028	70 hectares of blue-green corridors created and 30 hectares of “salad buffet” meadows sown
2030	35% reduction in the UU biodiversity footprint
2030	All UU laboratories achieve at least LEAF Bronze certification
2030	Results from 7 years of the Biodiversity Challenge provide a detailed inventory of species in our area to support policy decisions and management measures
2035	External audit: 20 indicator species have re-established themselves at the Utrecht Science Park (USP)

APPENDIX 3 – Transition Pathway: Circularity and Waste Management

The implementation and financing of this transition path are primarily the responsibility of the Facilities Management (waste) and Development (buildings) departments of Campus and Facilities.

I Our vision for the future: a university where materials, knowledge, and ideas circulate

We are moving toward a university where nothing is lost: a fully circular Utrecht University (UU) where materials, knowledge, and ideas circulate and where we make smart use of what the earth offers us. We make a positive contribution to systems that prevent waste, preserve value, and ensure a livable planet.

Our campus is evolving into a living laboratory where education, research, and operations reinforce one another. Here, we experiment with new materials, close loops, and utilize renewable and circular flows. Sustainability is not an add-on, but a way of life: evident in how we build, work, procure, and collaborate.

By bringing together our knowledge, creativity, and responsibility, we are guiding the transition from linear to circular—both within and beyond our walls. In this way, we are growing into a university that operates in a climate- and resource-neutral manner, demonstrating that circularity is not only necessary but also achievable and inspiring.

II Our impact

Our efforts focus on the following areas where we, as UU, can make an impact:

12 *Buildings & outdoor spaces:* The campus and our buildings are a living example of circular construction. Our buildings are becoming increasingly flexible, demountable, and furnished with sustainable and reusable materials.
13 *Support services*: Our support services—from IT and cleaning to office supplies, clothing, and other services—encourage reuse, repair, and efficient use of resources. In this way, we make circularity the standard in all our daily support operations and supply chains.

14 *Procurement*: Through our procurement practices, we are guiding the circular transition, step by step. We know the market is still evolving, but by maintaining an open dialogue, we are exploring opportunities together with our suppliers.
15 *Waste & Residual Materials*: There is no such thing as waste: our residual streams are raw materials. We prevent waste through smart design, reuse, and collaboration with partners. Where residual streams arise, we reintroduce them into the cycle as high-quality materials and test new solutions on campus.
16 *Food & Beverage*: We are making our food and beverage offerings more sustainable and striving for sustainably produced proteins[4] and regenerative hospitality[5] , where circularity is combined with a positive impact on soil, biodiversity, and local supply chains. In this way, we ensure more efficient use of raw materials, fewer losses in the supply chain, and sustainable cycles.

III Our ambition for 2030

By 2030, our buildings and business processes will be significantly more sustainable and circular in design: from energy and materials to procurement, logistics, and catering. The campus will function as a living laboratory where knowledge, practice, and experimentation converge to contribute to concrete, scalable solutions for the circular transition.

IV Goals and approach

IV.1 Buildings & Outdoor Spaces

2030 goal for buildings: Circularity is integrated into every real estate project: from new construction and renovation to decommissioning. In doing so, we prioritize demountable construction, bio-based materials, and the reuse of existing materials.
2030 Outdoor Space Goal: By 2030, the proportion of primary raw materials used in the design of outdoor spaces will have decreased by 50% compared to 2023. Every area project has a maximum MKI.

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[4] In doing so, we look not only at origin (animal or plant-based) but at the entire production chain. Plant-based proteins can have a lower impact, but this is not a given: intensive cultivation, monocultures, pesticide use, geographic origin, and deforestation can significantly reduce the sustainability of plant-based proteins.

[5] Regenerative hospitality is not only sustainable but actively contributes to value creation within the chain and the restoration of soil, biodiversity, ecosystems, and local communities through the procurement and preparation of food.

Approach to buildings:

- For every new real estate project, the circular principles and KPIs from Future-Proof Buildings are incorporated into the program of requirements as a starting point. [6]
- For all new construction, renovation, and redevelopment projects, we apply circular design principles and BREEAM-NL appropriate to the project[7], we prepare material passports, and we have contractors use tools such as BCI-Gebouw to program and monitor circular KPIs.
- For existing buildings, we determine the reuse potential in advance, explore transformation options, and, in the event of demolition, focus on circular dismantling and the reuse of materials and components.
- In interior design projects, we apply circular design principles: demountable, multifunctional, and using reusable, bio-based, or non-virgin materials.
- In decision-making, we make our CO2 budget transparent so that we know if and when we have exceeded our budget (reference: Paris Agreement 2-degree warming target).
- We investigate whether we can depreciate new construction to residual value, rather than to zero.

Area Approach:

- For our area and our outdoor space, we conduct an area scan to identify which materials are present in the outdoor space and how we can process them as high as possible on the R-ladder when they become available.
- Materials released on campus due to the redevelopment of an area will be reused as much as possible at the USP itself (or sold in a circular manner in collaboration with USP partners or surrounding municipalities).
- We are updating our Outdoor Space Design Manual. In it, we are selecting new standard materials that are durable and have multiple life cycles.

IV.2 Support Services

Goal 2030: Our support services make circularity the standard: we encourage reuse and extend the lifespan of resources wherever possible, within UU and in collaboration with partners.

[6] Download the Future-Proof Buildings Ambition Document here

[7] *BREEAM-NL New Construction and Renovation*, and *BREEAM-NL In-Use* for all renovation projects, aiming for the maximum score on all credits in the Materials category.

Approach:

- We maintain our furniture, IT equipment, office supplies, and other facility resources with a focus on extending their lifespan, repair, and reuse. We utilize and strengthen our existing initiatives, such as the Materials Transfer Point, the warehouse, and repair workshops. Replacement only occurs when technically and economically necessary. In the event of replacement or surplus capacity, resources are given a second life within UU or through partners. Additionally, we actively connect with national circular economy initiatives.
- For items such as furniture, research equipment, and lab supplies, we apply the preference principle: first reuse within UU, then secondhand, and only as a last resort, new, circularly produced items. We are strengthening Labex as a platform among USP partners to exchange lab supplies and give them a second life
- In all facility services—such as cleaning, clothing, and office supplies—we focus our procurement and contracting on reusable alternatives, more efficient resource use, and supply chain collaboration that minimizes waste.
- We manage water circularly in cleaning, sanitation, and other facility processes by limiting waste, reusing rainwater and process water where possible, and minimizing contaminated water flows.

IV.3 Procurement

2030 Goal: By 2030, circular procurement according to the R-ladder (R8 or higher) will be the standard for the UU, unless demonstrably unfeasible.

Approach:

- We are exploring how we can further implement circular procurement in a more systematic way across the entire university.
- Circular and sustainable criteria are part of our tenders, based on the Sustainable Procurement Guide and relevant KPIs. We train procurement officers and contract managers.
- We integrate circularity, energy neutrality, and future-proofing into the Statement of Requirements and the KPI matrix for all construction and maintenance projects. We apply the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) methodology to ensure sustainable choices throughout the lifecycle.
- We encourage suppliers to maintain, refurbish, or take back products and packaging materials.

IV.4 Waste & Residual Materials

2030 Goal: By 2030, UU will have a fully zero-waste operational model.

Approach:

- We are implementing separate waste collection (source separation) at all UU locations, including laboratories and downtown buildings. Our buildings are gradually achieving Zero Waste certification.
- Residual waste from standard processes is completely prevented. Mixed collection is permitted only when 100% post-separation is guaranteed. Where possible, residual waste streams are given a second life within UU, through collaborative partners, or among staff or students.
- We are exploring opportunities to further expand circular hubs for the reuse of furniture, materials, and equipment. In doing so, we coordinate with relevant partners and site managers to ensure that activities comply with applicable (safety) frameworks. We collaborate with circular processors and encourage the use of reusable packaging and reverse logistics (potentially in the future together with USP partners and residents).
- For each product group, we establish clear process steps for reuse and circular processing. This is communicated clearly, accessibly, and widely.
- We continue to monitor progress and results and make them transparent via our own waste dashboard with indicators such as residual waste reduction, separation rates, and processing methods.

IV.5 Food & Beverage

Goal 2030: By 2030, the food and beverage offering will be significantly more sustainable. We aim for a regenerative hospitality sector[8] in which circularity is combined with a positive impact on soil, biodiversity, and local supply chains.

Approach:

- We are developing a Strategic Vision for Food and Beverage that will result in attractive and financially viable service concepts, taking into account diverse user groups and market stakeholders.

[8] Regenerative food service is not only sustainable but actively contributes to value creation within the supply chain and the restoration of soil, biodiversity, ecosystems, and local communities through the procurement and preparation of food.

- We are entering into partnerships with suppliers who work with regeneratively produced raw materials[9] and closed-loop systems.
- We prevent food waste through better inventory management, the reuse of food scraps, and the distribution of leftover meals via food apps or partners.
- We collaborate with caterers, students, and researchers on transparent waste streams, monitoring, and circular solutions for materials and packaging.

[9] Regenerative hospitality is not only sustainable but actively contributes to the restoration of soil, biodiversity, ecosystems, and local communities through the procurement and preparation of food

V Milestones

2026	CO2 budget for material-bound $_{CO2\ in}$ building materials integrated into decision-making
2026	Conducting the first outdoor space area scan
2026	100% separate waste collection (pre- or post-sorting)
2026	First building with a Zero Waste certificate
2026	Strategic vision for Food & Beverage established
2027	Depreciation methodology aligned with residual value of circularly developed new construction
2027	Expansion of our circular hubs
2027	Circular design principles integrated into core work processes
2028	Established process steps for reuse and circular processing
2030	Realization of real estate projects according to circular KPIs
2030	Materials passport and LCA for all real estate projects
2030	Extending the lifespan and reusing furniture and IT equipment Structurally integrated into all support services
2030	100% circular procurement
2030	100% zero-waste operations; all buildings have a zero-waste certificate
2030	All UU laboratories have a (minimum bronze) LEAF certificate

APPENDIX 4 - Climate Adaptation Transition Path

The implementation of this transition path is primarily the responsibility of the Campus and Facilities Development department, for both the buildings and the outdoor spaces (area development), and is primarily funded through the (yet-to-be-established) land development fund.

I Our vision for the future: a resilient and future-proof university

Utrecht University is gradually evolving into a resilient, future-proof university. By investing in climate adaptation now, we are preparing for climate change. Utrecht Science Park (USP) has become noticeably greener and more resilient to the effects of climate change, such as heat, flooding, and drought. At the same time, we are improving the quality of life at USP, enhancing biodiversity, and creating a healthy, attractive environment for learning, working, and socializing.

As the owner of buildings in the city center, University College, and a large part of the USP, we are taking our responsibility seriously. Every investment, renovation, and area development is leveraged to reduce heat, retain water, enhance biodiversity, and improve the well-being of the campus community. By combining our own scientific knowledge with practical experience, we make smart choices in design, management, and operations. Staff, students, and partners are actively involved in this process.

UU serves as a role model: we take good care of our campus and the people who live, work, and learn there—now and in the future. In this way, we are laying the foundation to be fully climate-resilient by 2040: a university that not only mitigates risks but actively adds value to a healthy and safe living environment for people and animals.

II Our impact

Our efforts focus on three areas where we at UU can make an impact:

1. *Climate-resilient buildings*: We are making our buildings climate-resilient through smart, physical adjustments to design, systems, and maintenance, so they are better able to withstand heat, flooding, and extreme weather conditions.
2. *Resilient campus*: We are developing the USP into a landscape that retains water, reduces heat stress, and enhances biodiversity and well-being. This also fosters an attractive study and research environment.
3. *Resilience in extreme conditions*: We are increasing our preparedness for extreme weather conditions. In this way, we work to ensure the safety of students and staff and guarantee the continuity of education, research, and

operations.

III Our ambition for 2030

By 2030, UU will have firmly embedded climate adaptation into policy, design, management, and our daily operations. We have a clear picture of our risks and actively involve staff and students in implementation. Thus, 2030 marks an important turning point: we are laying the foundation to become a fully climate-resilient university by 2040, with buildings, areas, and processes that adapt to the climate of tomorrow.

IV Goals and Approach

IV.1 Climate-resilient buildings

2030 Goal: In every real estate project, we take measures to limit the impact of extreme weather on buildings and the surrounding area.

Approach:

- We systematically assess the climate risks for each building using water simulations, heat stress maps, and climate damage estimates, and incorporate these into the property plans. We determine how we can mitigate the risks.
- We assess all building designs against water infiltration requirements using the water simulation model. We retain rainwater, collect it, and discharge it slowly. This reduces the risk of flooding, pollution, and environmental damage in the surrounding area.
- For every new real estate project, the climate-adaptive principles and KPIs from our Ambition Document on Future-Proof Buildings[10]are incorporated as a starting point in the program of requirements.
- For all new construction and large-scale renovation projects, we apply BREEAM-NL principles appropriate to the type of project.[11]
- We develop concrete measures and implement them in phases, such as green roofs, green facades, rainwater buffers, buffer floors, robust systems, and

[10] Download the Future-Proof Buildings Ambition Document here

[11] For all new construction and large-scale renovation projects, we use *BREEAM-NL New Construction and Renovation*, aiming for the maximum score on the credits *POL 03 Stormwater Runoff* and *WST 05 Climate Adaptation*. For all renovation projects, we use *BREEAM-NL In-Use*, aiming for the maximum score on the credits *RSL 01 Climate Risk Analysis* and *RSL 02 Measures to Reduce Stormwater Runoff*.

reflective materials. We implement showcase projects to demonstrate *best practices*.
- We allocate budget in the Strategic Housing Plan (SHP) for climate measures to prevent climate damage.

IV.2 Resilient campus

Goal: By 2040, our campuses will be designed to be climate-resilient, with sufficient greenery per cluster, adequate shade along main routes, and cool spots within 200 meters. At the USP, the temperature will never be more than 5 degrees warmer than outside the city.

Approach:

- We map climate risks for sites using our water simulation model, the climate impact atlas, heat stress maps, climate damage estimates, sensor data, and a digital twin.
- We develop and/or update policy frameworks, guidelines, and plans, such as the Outdoor Space Design Manual (2026), the Tree Plan, and the water compensation map. We actively collaborate with the municipality and other government agencies to ensure coordination and integration into water and environmental plans.
- We allocate budget within Land Development (GREX) for climate measures to prevent climate damage.
- We utilize the Living Lab Healthy Heidelberglaan to measure the effects of climate measures such as adding greenery and shade.
- We integrate adaptation criteria into project plans, area development, and investment decisions.
- We are initiating concrete adaptation measures: greening, green roofs and facades, water infiltration, shade structures, and removal of paving where possible. In doing so, we maximize opportunities to link these efforts with the biodiversity program and other sustainability initiatives.

IV.3 Resilience under extreme conditions

2030 Goal: The UU is prepared: in the event of heat, extreme rain, drought, or storms, we can respond effectively together with our partners, limit damage, and ensure continuity.

Approach:

- We are taking stock of existing emergency plans and ensuring sufficient integration of climate adaptation.
- We identify our critical infrastructure, together with local partners.
- We will develop a heat plan, a drought plan, and a water/flood protocol, and establish communication processes.

V Milestones

2026	Launch of the USP water simulation model
2026	Delivery of climate-resilient landscape design USP with designated locations for shade, cooling, and water collection
2026	Identification of which buildings and facilities, such as research facilities, laboratories, and utilities, are vulnerable to flooding
2026	Risks of climate damage to UU buildings and the surrounding area identified
2026	Start of (baseline) measurements of temperature and wind conditions in the USP central area
2027	Start phased implementation of solutions for buildings and campus
2027	Update emergency plans regarding climate adaptation (heat, water, drought) for main locations
2030	Commissioning of Van Unnik as a pilot project

APPENDIX 5 - Climate Mitigation Transition Path

I Our vision for the future: On the path to a climate-neutral Utrecht University

As Utrecht University (UU), we contribute to a healthy and resilient climate by reducing our direct and indirect CO_2 emissions. We are making our buildings more sustainable, saving energy, and generating our own renewable energy. We are reducing or greening our logistics and mobility. Our procurement decisions are partly focused on CO_2 reduction and circularity. In addition, we conduct our operations as circularly as possible, thereby reducing our demand for new raw materials and further decreasing our CO_2 impact. In addition to achieving our sustainability goals, this also lowers our costs for emission allowances and CO_2 offsets, which are expected to rise in the coming years.
Step by step, this creates a university where innovative solutions are visible in the built environment and in our behavior, and where we demonstrate with conviction that a climate-neutral future is not only necessary but also achievable and inspiring.

II Our impact

Our efforts focus on the following areas where we, as UU, can make an impact:

17 *Energy*: We are reducing our energy demand and increasing our supply of renewable energy to lower our direct and indirect energy-related CO_2 emissions (Scope 1 and 2).
18 *Circularity*: By using materials for as long as possible, encouraging reuse, and minimizing waste, we reduce our demand for new raw materials and lower both our direct and indirect CO2 emissions.
19 *Logistics*: Efficient and sustainable logistics help reduce our CO_2 emissions and improve the quality of life on campus. Through smart supply chain management and zero-emission transportation, we minimize the climate impact of our goods flows.
20 *Mobility*: Travel is part of studying, working, and collaborating at UU, but we do so in a climate-conscious manner. Mobility is limited where possible, shifted to more sustainable alternatives, and, where necessary, made fully sustainable, so that our CO_2 emissions decrease significantly.
21 *Digitalization*: Digitalization supports knowledge and collaboration at UU, but must not come at the expense of the climate. We use our digital resources responsibly, efficiently, and with climate awareness to limit the growth of data consumption and the load on servers wherever possible.

22 *Construction and Renovation*: In the construction and renovation of our buildings, we prioritize sustainability and energy efficiency. Through smart designs, green materials, and energy-saving techniques, we limit our CO_2 emissions.
23 *Procurement*: Through our procurement practices, we actively contribute to a carbon-neutral society. We recognize that the market is still evolving, but by maintaining an open dialogue, we explore opportunities together with our suppliers.
24 *Food and Beverage*: We opt for sustainably produced proteins[12] and regenerative food service concepts[13] . In this way, we make responsible food and beverage choices a matter of course within UU, while meeting the diverse needs of our community.
25 *CO_2-conscious decisions and more efficient processes*: We make CO_2 impact a natural part of every investment and decision-making process by providing insight into reliable CO_2 data and using it to steer our course in a conscious and future-proof manner.

The impact areas are addressed in part through separate programs, projects, or within departments, and they are interconnected and overlap. For example, Energy and Circularity have been developed into separate transition pathways, and Construction & Renovation, Procurement, and Food & Beverage are impact areas within the Circularity, Biodiversity, and Climate Mitigation transition pathways.

III Our Ambition for 2030

Utrecht University is working toward CO_2-neutral operations. We are fully committed to structural CO_2 reduction through, among other things, our buildings, circularity, logistics processes, the mobility of our staff and students, procurement, and food and beverage. By 2030 at the latest, our operations will be CO_2-neutral for Scope 1 and 2, and by 2035 we will be completely natural gas-free.

[12] In doing so, we look not only at origin (animal or plant-based) but at the entire production chain. Plant-based proteins can have a lower environmental impact, but this is not a given: intensive cultivation, monocultures, pesticide use, geographic origin, and deforestation can significantly reduce the sustainability of plant-based proteins.

[13] Regenerative hospitality is not only sustainable but actively contributes to value creation within the supply chain and the restoration of soil, biodiversity, ecosystems, and local communities through the procurement and preparation of food.

Explanation of CO2 emissions: explanation of Scope 1, 2, and 3

Scope 1: includes direct CO2 emissions from own sources, such as fuel consumption by company vehicles or heating systems.

Scope 2: includes indirect CO2 emissions from purchased energy, such as electricity, heat, or steam generated elsewhere.

Scope 3: includes other indirect CO2 emissions in the value chain, such as the production of purchased materials, third-party transportation, waste processing, the use and end-of-life phase of products, commuting, and business travel.

IV Goals and Approach

IV.1 Energy (Scope 1 and 2, Energy Transition Path)

2030 Goal: By 2030, the UU will be fully CO_2-neutral for Scopes 1 and 2, and by 2035, fully natural gas-free.

Approach: We are committed to reducing our energy demand, increasing our supply of renewable energy, and managing our energy assets more intelligently.
The specific goals, measures, and implementation approach are detailed in the separate Energy transition path.

IV.2 Circularity (Scope 3, Circularity and Waste Management Transition Path)

2030 Goal: By 2030, UU will have made substantial progress in circular buildings, operations, procurement, logistics, and catering.

Approach: We are focusing on the following impact areas: buildings, support services, procurement, waste & residual materials, and food & beverages.
The specific goals, measures, and implementation approach are detailed in the separate Circularity & Waste Management transition pathway.

IV.3 Logistics (Scope 2)

2030 Goal: By 2030, we will use only electric vehicles within UU, unless this is demonstrably impossible due to operational requirements. By using vehicles more intelligently and through car-sharing, we will reduce the size of our fleet and increase vehicle utilization.

Approach:

- We are electrifying our vehicle fleet in phases: at natural junctures, where it is practical, we will replace our vehicles with electric alternatives.
- We are committed to vehicle sharing and are working with the faculties to determine what is needed to make this happen.
- We are investigating whether there are any alternatives for logistics transport movements.

IV.4 Mobility (Scope 3)

2030 Goal: By 2030, more than 80% of commuting and travel to and from campus will be sustainable, primarily by bicycle or public transportation. Business travel by plane will be avoided as much as possible.

Approach:

- We encourage cycling, public transportation, and other sustainable modes of transport for commuting to work or school by staff and students.
- We will improve the tracking of business travel and implement CO_2 calculations and budgets for business travel.
- We are developing a targeted approach to reduce our air travel and make it standard practice to travel short (international) distances by train.

IV.5 Digitalization (Scope 3)

2030 Goal: By 2030, we aim to limit the growth of the CO_2 impact of our data centers as much as possible.[14]

Approach:

- We ensure that our cloud storage runs on renewable energy as much as possible. We assess the sustainability of our current cloud storage and determine to what extent it meets sustainability requirements.
- We are improving the efficiency of our servers and digital infrastructure (PUE of less than 1.2 [15]).

[14] Both UU data centers already run on 100% green electricity.

[15] PUE = Power Usage Effectiveness, where 1.0 is perfect but difficult to achieve. Currently, the servers have a PUE of 1.2 and 1.27, respectively

- We apply sustainable procurement criteria and Life Cycle Management for ICT hardware.
- We monitor the data centers' energy consumption and use these insights to specifically reduce the associated CO_2 emissions.
- In collaboration with faculties, we are investigating whether and how research data that is 5 years old or older can be moved to cold storage.[16]
- We are developing a standard list of minimum sustainability criteria for ICT equipment that will be included in every tender by default.
- Together with the Faculty of Science, we are investigating whether Green DiSC certification is feasible. If so, we will explore whether expansion to other faculties is also possible.
- We are coordinating with the AI and Education Program to ensure that sustainability is addressed within the program.

IV.6 Construction and Renovation (Scope 1 and 3)

2030 Goal: We will build all new construction projects to be energy-positive, aim for energy neutrality in major renovations, and make minor renovations as energy-efficient as possible.

Approach:

- For every new real estate project, the CO_2 emission reduction principles and KPIs from Future-Proof Buildings[17]are incorporated as a starting point in the program of requirements.
- For all new construction and large-scale renovation projects, we apply BREEAM-NL principles appropriate to the type of project.[18]
- During the design phase, various adjustments and scenarios are tested, and performance is analyzed using dynamic building simulations.
- When making decisions, we make our CO2 budget transparent so that we know if and when we have exceeded our budget (reference: Paris Agreement 2-degree warming target).

[16] Cold storage centers are more energy-efficient, but data is much less readily available.

[17] Download the Future-Proof Buildings Ambition Document here

[18] For all new construction and large-scale renovation projects, we use *BREEAM-NL New Construction and Renovation*, and for all renovation projects, *BREEAM-NL In-Use*, aiming for the maximum score on all credits in the Energy category.

IV.7 Procurement (Scope 3)

2030 Goal: By 2030, circular procurement according to the R-ladder (R8 or higher) will be the standard for the UU, unless demonstrably unfeasible.

Approach:

- We are exploring how we can implement circular procurement even more extensively and systematically across the entire university.
- Sustainability criteria are part of our tenders, based on the Sustainable Procurement Manual and relevant KPIs. We train procurement officers and contract managers.
- We integrate circularity, energy neutrality, biodiversity, and future-proofing into the Statement of Requirements and the KPI matrix for all construction and maintenance projects. We apply the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) methodology to ensure sustainable choices throughout the lifecycle.
- We encourage suppliers to maintain, refurbish, or take back products.

IV.8 Food and Beverage

2030 Goal: By 2030, the food and beverage offerings will be significantly more sustainable. We aim for sustainably produced proteins[19] and regenerative hospitality[20] .

Approach:

- We are developing a Strategic Vision for Food and Beverage that will result in attractive and financially viable service concepts, taking into account diverse user groups and market players.
- We will enter into partnerships with suppliers who work with regeneratively produced raw materials and closed-loop systems.
- We support experiments and pilot projects proposed by the UU community and investigate whether these can lead to more widely applicable initiatives.

[19] In doing so, we look not only at origin (animal or plant-based) but at the entire production chain. Plant-based proteins can have a lower impact, but this is not a given: intensive cultivation, monocultures, pesticide use, geographic origin, and deforestation can significantly reduce the sustainability of plant-based proteins.

[20] Regenerative hospitality is not only sustainable but actively contributes to value creation within the chain and the restoration of soil, biodiversity, ecosystems, and local communities through the procurement and preparation of food.

IV.9 CO_2-conscious decisions and more efficient processes

2030 Goal: By 2030, CO_2 impact will be a standard component of all proposals and developments that affect our emissions. Starting as early as 2026, the CO_2 impact will be explicitly included in all investment proposals related to energy, fostering awareness of the consequences of decisions and their contribution to CO_2 reduction or increase.

Approach:

- We integrate CO_2 impact into policy proposals and decisions regarding Scope 1 and 2.
- We make our CO_2 budget transparent.
- We will implement CO_2 pricing if we have workable and effective tools available for this purpose.
- We develop policies regarding CO_2 offsetting.
- We calculate an annual CO2 footprint and focus on centralizing data collection.
- We are developing a uniform and transparent method for CO2 reporting in collaboration with other universities.

V Milestones

2025	Digitalization: Both UU data centers operate on 100% renewable electricity.
2025	Biodiversity: Launch of the annual biodiversity footprint
2025	UU signs the Sustainability Manifesto 'Sustainable Thinking, Sustainable Action' by De Jonge Academie and The Young Green Academy
2026	Energy: Energy Plan '26–'29 completed, including an update to thermal energy storage policy; prioritization framework for sustainable energy supply established; energy management system and data-driven building optimization implemented; Bunnik solar park begins operation; battery in use.
2026	Circularity: CO_2 budget for material-related CO_2 in building materials integrated into decision-making; 100% separate waste collection implemented; first building with Zero Waste certification; first outdoor area scan of outdoor space conducted.
2026	Mobility: Approach to reducing the number of air trips implemented.
2026	Food & Beverage: Strategic Vision for Food & Beverage established; launch of The Pit (vegan meals)
2026	CO_2 Decisions: Blueprint for CO_2 reporting, developed in consultation with other Dutch universities, is complete and ready for implementation.
2027	Energy: Acquisition of 10kV grid completed.

2027 Circularity: System for depreciating to residual value for circular new construction implemented; expansion of circular hubs; circular design principles are a structural part of the main work process.

2027 Digitalization: At least one of the most widely used cloud storage services runs on green energy.

2027 Construction & Renovation / CO_2 Decisions: CO_2 budgeting is routinely applied in investment and decision-making processes for building projects.

2028 Digitalization: Both data centers have a PUE < 1.2.

2028 Circularity: Defined process steps for reuse and circular processing have been implemented.

2030 Laboratories: All UU laboratories have at least a bronze LEAF certification.

2030 Circularity: 100% zero-waste operations; all buildings have a Zero Waste certificate; material passports and LCA applied to all real estate projects; extending the lifespan and reusing furniture and IT equipment are structurally embedded.

2030 Mobility: More than 80% of commuting takes place by bicycle or public transportation.

2030 Construction & Renovation: All real estate projects are carried out in accordance with CO_2-reduction principles and KPIs from Future-Proof Buildings.

2030 Procurement: 100% circular procurement.