A LOOK BACK AT SUSTAINABILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTRECHT - 2025

Campus as a Compass

Utrecht University is working on sustainable solutions for a healthy planet and its inhabitants. We are making our own university more sustainable. In 2025, we adopted the Strategic Sustainability Execution Plan and reported on sustainability for the first time in line with European guidelines (CSRD). We were also the first Dutch university to calculate a biodiversity footprint and to sign the national manifesto “Duurzaam denken, duurzaam doen” through which we are embedding sustainability as an integral part of our education, research, and operations.

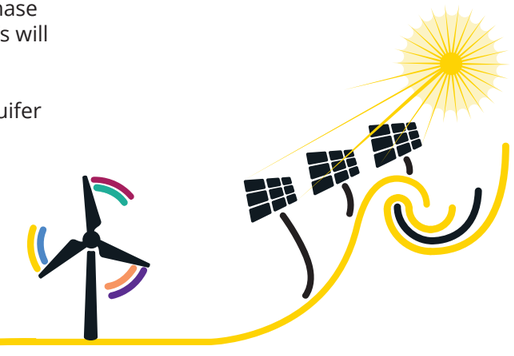
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

On the path to 2035

Share of renewable energy in our energy consumption. **26%**
Utrecht University will be **natural gas-free** by 2035 at the latest. **52%**

2%	increase in total energy consumption in buildings compared to 2024.
25%	decrease in energy consumption from fossil fuels compared to 2024.
27%	natural gas savings (4 million m³), achieved in part through smarter use of the combined heat and power plant.
5%	of our renewable energy is generated on-site using solar panels.

- **Solar energy:** We were the first Dutch university to purchase a solar farm. Together with over 7,500 rooftop panels, this will soon account for over 30% of our own electricity.
- **Geothermal energy:** New buildings are connected to aquifer thermal energy storage systems (ATES) as standard.



BIODIVERSITY

On the path to 2030

70 hectares of blue-green infrastructure at the USP. **75%**
30 hectares of herb-rich grassland at the Tolakker. **23%**
35% reduction in biodiversity footprint. **0%**

2.244 PDF.ha.year	baseline measurement of our biodiversity footprint.
12 icon species	recorded on our properties, including the little owl and the grass snake.
11%	of our laboratories are now certified as sustainable.

- **Biodiversity Footprint:** First footprint determined. The greatest impact comes from energy supply and food. Goal for 2030: 35% reduction in impact.
- **Ecological Corridor:** The first 2.5 hectares of an ecological corridor in Utrecht Science Park (USP) have been completed and connected to the Dutch Nature Network.
- **International partnership:** UU is a partner in the global “Nature Positive Universities” network for knowledge sharing with other universities.
- **Bioblitz:** 264 participants collectively recorded 915 different plant and animal species on campus.

CIRCULARITY

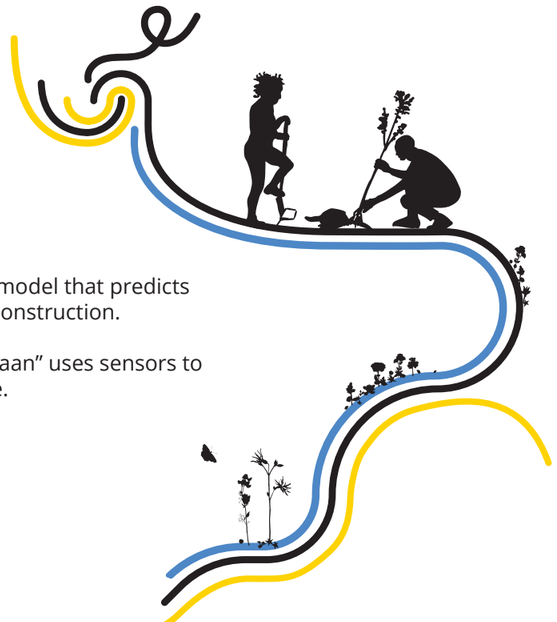
On the path to 2030

Zero-waste operations. **6%**

4%	less commercial waste.
6%	less residual waste.
63%	of commercial waste is still being incinerated or sent to landfill.
2,3%	circular raw materials management (75% increase compared to 2024).
11 types of vegetables	are sourced by the caterer through regenerative agriculture channels.

- **Waste separation:** Campus-wide waste separation at the source has been implemented, including in complex laboratory environments. “ScheidZooi” campaign carried out to improve waste separation practices among staff and students.
- **Circular management:** Raw materials are being reused more effectively, including through the university’s own Materials Transfer Point.
- **Reuse in new construction:** The design of the new Faculty of Veterinary Medicine building directly reuses materials from the Martinus G. de Bruin building, which is scheduled for demolition. Reuse of the structural framework of the Van Unnik building and the former Earth Sciences building.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION



- **Flooding:** Introduction of a digital water simulation model that predicts flooding in the USP and provides guidance for new construction.
- **Measuring heat stress:** The “Living Lab Heidelberglaan” uses sensors to collect real-time data on wind and local temperature.

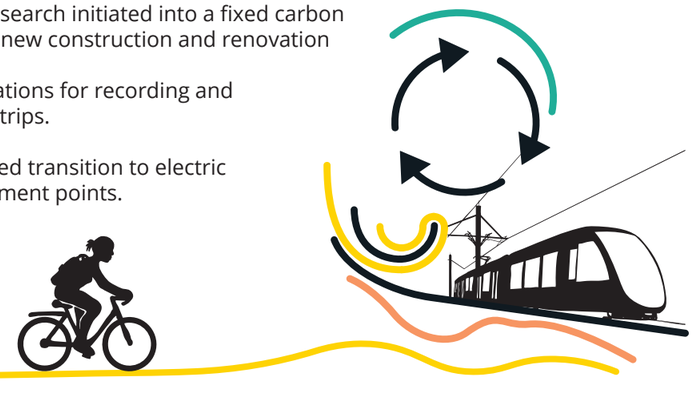
CLIMATE MITIGATION

Carbon neutral (scope 1 en 2).

On the path to 2030 **45%**

26%	carbon savings (Scopes 1 and 2) compared to 2024.
49%	of the university’s vehicle fleet is fully electric or emission-free.
52%	of employees commute by bicycle, 23% by public transport, and 25% by car.

- **Carbon budget for construction**: Research initiated into a fixed carbon budget for building materials used in new construction and renovation
- **Business travel:** Operational preparations for recording and calculating emissions for all business trips.
- **Vehicle Fleet Electrification:** A phased transition to electric vehicles has begun at natural replacement points.

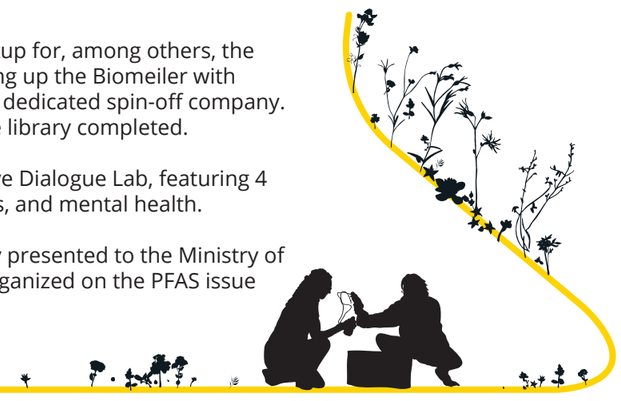


LIVING LABS

Through the **Center for Living Labs**, we put scientific research into practice on our own campus and in our own buildings.

13	sustainable Living Labs involving 60 different organizations.
140	scientists, faculty, and staff are actively involved.
40+	students contributed through courses, internships, and theses.
15	workshops were organized to further develop the Living Labs.

- **Test sites:** Implementation of a new pilot setup for, among others, the Department of Chemistry – LUMIFIELD. Scaling up the Biomeiler with 5 new test sites, resulting in the creation of a dedicated spin-off company. Design for the greening of UBB Square of the library completed.
- **Dialogue & Society:** Launch of the Generative Dialogue Lab, featuring 4 dialogues on topics including AI, the elections, and mental health.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Living Labs successfully presented to the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and a major symposium organized on the PFAS issue with 15 external partners.



GREEN COMMUNITY

Through the **Green Office**, we are building an active, sustainable community:

6	Green Teams are active at faculties and UCU, with a total of 40 participants.
30	participants in the Green Labs Task Force are working to make laboratories more sustainable.
131	organized activities, including those focused on community building and networking.
1000	participants in activities.
30	volunteers who help organize activities and projects.
100	items given a second life during our Repair Cafés.