OUR ROUTE TO 2030: HOW WE WORK ON BIODIVERSITY

Utrecht University (UU) works towards sustainability in all its operations. This plan outlines our goals for biodiversity and the steps we are taking to achieve them.

Our dream

Imagine a campus where you cycle past twittering birds, green roofs collect rainwater and you have your lunch among blooming plants. A place where cows graze on herb-rich grasslands, and where plants and animals can move freely between Utrecht Science Park and surrounding wildlife areas such as Amelisweerd and Landgoed Oostbroek. Biodiversity is visible everywhere on campus and an obvious part of the choices we make and the impact we have.

Our ambition

"A lively and future-proof university, where we contribute to healthy ecosystems and more biodiversity with sustainable choices, on our own campus and worldwide."

Why is working on biodiversity important (to us)?

On our campus, people and nature live together. The choices we make on how we arrange and use our campus influence the local biodiversity. But our impact does not stop at the boundaries of the campus. Everything UU does also influences the biodiversity further away. Our choices determine how and where products are made, and what impact that has on nature. Think along the lines of the materials we use and the food we buy. The influence of what UU buys on biodiversity elsewhere in the world is what we call the biodiversity footprint.

20 icon species

With our devotion to local biodiversity, we improve the habitat of twenty icon species, so they can settle permanently in Utrecht Science Park no later than 2035. These species were originally found here. If they feel at home here again, the same goes for hundreds of other species and we will know the ecosystem on our campus is healthy.

Our approach

1

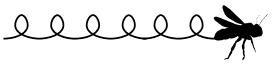
Reducing the footprint
Our biodiversity footprint will be reduced by 35% in 2030. We will do so by arranging our operations as sustainably as possible.

What we will do:

- We will conserve energy and generate energy more sustainably.
- We will purchase resources in a more sustainable way and handle materials in a more economical way.
- We will reduce our print use and make laboratories and catering more sustainable.
- We will measure and publish our biodiversity footprint every year.
- We will ensure that all laboratories have sustainability certificates.

2

Enhancing and restoring biodiversity on our campus
By 2030, we will realise more space for water and for native plants and animals, and we will connect the campus with the surrounding nature network, such as Landgoed Oostbroek and Amelisweerd. In 2035, 20 icon species will have settled permanently in Utrecht Science Park.



What we will do:

- We will realise 70 hectares of connected small landscape elements such as verges, ditches, pools and wooded thickets, including two ecological connection zones. These broad green strips will connect the campus with surrounding wildlife areas, so species can move freely.
- We will make our own farm De Tolakker even more sustainable and realise 30 hectares of 'salad buffet': grassland sown with a mixture of twenty different herbs, clovers and grasses.
- We will include biodiversity in our policy and in our choices.

3

Increasing awareness and involvement
In the period up to 2030, we will work on inspiring students, staff members and collaboration partners in order to help reduce our footprint and to restore and enhance biodiversity.

What we will do:

- We will build an active community of students and staff members.
- We will organise activities and challenges about biodiversity, in schools and on our campus, in which participants themselves map biodiversity.
- We will share our knowledge and show inspiring examples to the rest of the world. For instance within the network Nature Positive Universities, a worldwide network of universities which devotes itself to the restoration of biodiversity.

Working on a sustainable UU together

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uu.nl/en/organisation/sustainability-at-the-university

Contact: duurzaamheid@uu.nl

OUR ROUTE TO 2030: HOW WE WORK ON CIRCULARITY

Utrecht University (UU) works towards sustainability in all its operations. This plan outlines our goals for circularity and the steps we are taking to achieve them.

Our dream

Imagine a campus where waste no longer exists. Everything we have left becomes a resource for something new. Construction materials from renovations receive a second life in new buildings. Furniture, laboratory equipment and IT resources are recycled, repaired, shared or reused. We use what the Earth provides us with cleverly and share our knowledge about this with the world. This way, we make Utrecht University an inspiring example of a circular organisation.

Why is working on circularity important (to us)?

In the current economy, many products are made, used and then discarded. This leads to an enormous mountain of waste, additional carbon emissions and exhaustion of important resources. We do not want to contribute to that as UU. That is why we encourage reuse and make the concious choice for renewable resources which can grow back. By doing so, we save a lot of energy, prevent waste and enhance biodiversity, as fewer resources that put pressure on nature are needed. In this way, we ensure that the Earth still has plenty to offer in the future.

Our ambition

"A university where products, materials and knowledge keep circulating for a sustainable world."

Prevent	R1 - Refuse:	Preventing the use of raw materials by abandoning a product and its function.
Reduce raw materials or use them smarter	R2a - Reduce:	Reduce use of raw materials or use materials with a longer lifespan.
	R2b - Redesign:	Redesigning a product so that it is demountable or so that fewer materials are needed.
Extending product and component life	R3 - Reuse:	Reuse of a product (second-hand)
	R4 - Repair:	Maintenance and repair of a product.
	R5 - Refurbish:	Refurbishing or modernising a product.
	R6 - Remanufacture:	Reuse of product parts for a new product.
	R7 - Repurpose:	Reuse of a product for another function.
Beneficial use of materials and resources	R8 - Recycle	Processing used materials into raw materials of the same (high-grade) or lesser (low-grade) quality.
	R9 - Recover	Incineration of materials with energy recovery.
Dumping	R10 - Landfill:	Materials that cannot (now) remain in the production chain are landfilled (e.g. hazardous substances).

Circular economy

Linear economy

The R Ladder helps us to choose. The best choices are at the top: use less, reuse and repair. Discarding or burning is at the bottom. The higher it is on the ladder, the better it is for the world.

Our approach

1

Buildings and outside spaces
In 2030, we will mostly build and renovate circularly. We will develop buildings which can easily be disassembled. We will use natural materials and reuse what is already there.

What we will do:

- We will investigate how we can set a maximum for the carbon emissions of our construction projects and how we can actively guide towards this.
- For every construction project, we will apply circular rules: we will choose materials which last for a long time, can be used more often and can easily be detached without breaking them.
- Every building will receive a 'passport' which shows exactly which materials are in it, so we will know from the beginning how we can reuse them later.
- Before we demolish or renovate, we will look at which materials we can give a second life on our own campus or in outside spaces.
- For our outside spaces as well, we will choose materials which last long and are reusable.
- We will investigate how we can modify our accounting system to take reuse and residual value into consideration, to make the construction of circular buildings more financially appealing.
- We will save and reuse water where this is possible.

2

Supporting resources
In 2030, circular working will be the standard for all our service departments. We will not discard things just because, but reuse them instead. Together with our partners, we will ensure that everything we have will last for as long as possible.

What we will do:

- We will maintain and repair our items, and share them where possible. This makes products last longer and we will have to buy new things less often.
- We will only buy new products if reusing or buying used products is not an option, in which case we will always choose items that can be reused to prevent waste.
- Furniture, computers and other devices we have left over will receive a second life within the university or with our partners.

3

Purchase
In 2030, UU will practise 100% circular purchasing, unless doing so is really not possible. We will use the 'R Ladder' for this.

What we will do:

- We will ensure that the entire university purchases goods and services in the same, sustainable way.
- In each contract with a supplier, we will set clear agreements on sustainability, circularity and reuse. And we will ask them about the possibility to maintain and repair products, as well as returning them to their respective suppliers at the end of their lifespans.
- We will train our staff members who are in charge of the contracts and purchases, so they will know exactly how to make the best circular choices.
- Before we purchase something, we will not only assess the current price, but also the total costs and environmental effects across the entire lifespan of the product.

4

Waste and residual materials
In 2030, Utrecht University will operate fully waste-free (zero waste). This means we will not produce useless waste anymore and that residual materials will be recycled sustainably into new resources.

What we will do:

- We will separate waste at all locations for the purpose of reducing residual waste to an absolute minimum. From 2026 onwards, we will collect waste 100% separately. All our buildings will have zero-waste certificates in 2030.
- We will set up a central logistics centre for storage, repair or disassembly of big materials, such as furniture, construction materials and devices. We will use small hubs for standard waste flows, such as plastic, paper and organic waste, in order to reduce transport.
- For each type of product, we will make a plan for reuse or sustainable processing.
- With a waste dashboard, we will keep track of our progress and share the results.

5

Food and drinks
In 2030, all our food and drinks will be sustainable and circular. We will choose products which are good for the soil, biodiversity and climate, and prevent wasting resources.

What we will do:

- We will make a strategy for sustainable and appealing food and drinks.
- We will work with suppliers who make their products in ways which help nature recover.
- We will discard as little food as possible. What is left over, we will reuse in a clever way.
- Together with caterers, students and researchers, we will provide reusable packaging and make it clear where our waste will go to.

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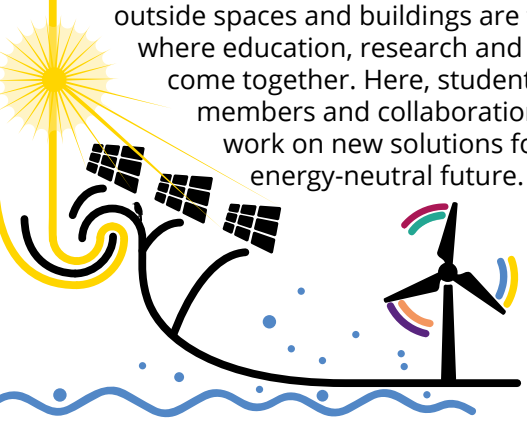
OUR ROUTE TO 2030: HOW WE WORK ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Utrecht University (UU) works towards sustainability in all its operations. This plan outlines our goals for energy and the steps we are taking to achieve them.

Our dream

Imagine a campus where we generate all our energy sustainably and use it smartly. Our outside spaces and buildings are the places where education, research and innovation come together. Here, students, staff members and collaboration partners work on new solutions for an energy-neutral future.

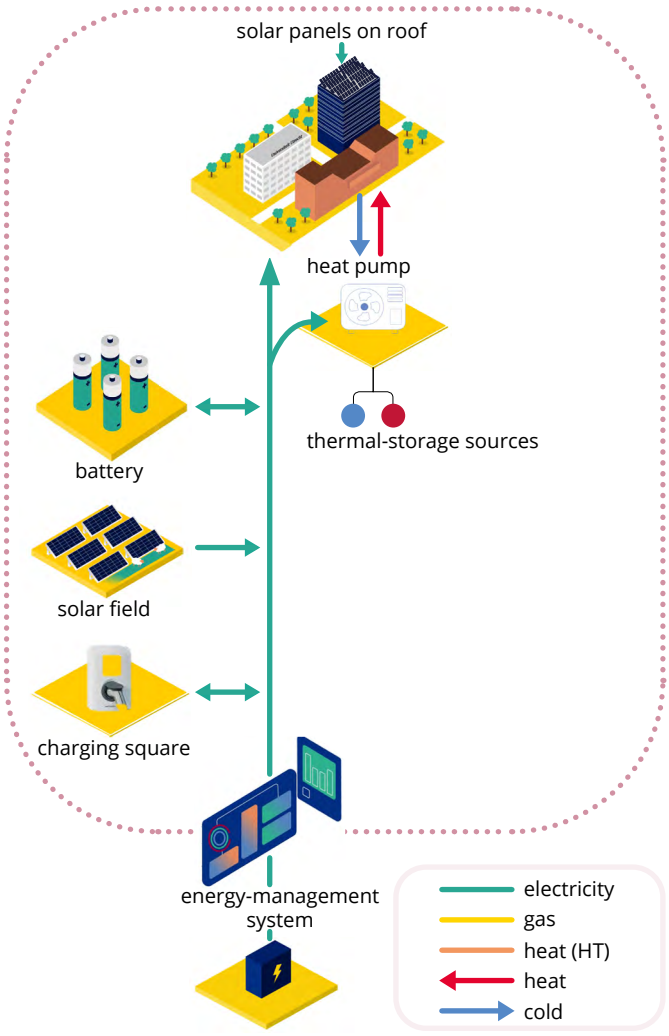


Why is working on sustainable energy important (to us)?

We need energy in the form of electricity, heating and cooling in order to study, work and keep our laboratories operational. However, our current energy consumption comes with carbon emissions and has a direct impact on the climate in the process. This is why we are reducing our energy consumption and are in the process of switching to sustainable sources. This way, we prepare our campus and buildings for the future.

Our ambition

"A university with a carbon-neutral energy provision. No later than 2035, we will no longer be using natural gas and all our energy will come from sustainable sources."



Realisation of the goal will result in a natural-gas-free energy provision and buildings connected to thermal storage.

Our approach

1

Using less energy
We will reduce our energy consumption by at least 3% per year.

What we will do:

- We will draft an energy plan so we can reduce our consumption one step at a time.
- We will make our buildings more sustainable with smart systems for heating and cooling.
- We will carry out energy-saving measures which we can earn back within 7 years.
- We will encourage researchers to purchase energy-saving devices and obtain a sustainability quality mark (LEAF) for laboratories.

2

More of our own sustainable energy
In 2035, all our energy will come from sustainable sources; we will generate at least 30% locally ourselves.

What we will do:

- We will prioritise our own carbon-free energy, such as solar panels on rooftops.
- We will use batteries and new technologies to store heat and energy. We will also improve the performance of our thermal-storage system.
- We will improve the use of our power grid and investigate the possibility of taking over this network ourselves, so we become more flexible and have more control.

3

Using energy flexibly together
In 2030, working on sustainable energy will be an integral part of our daily work. We will do this by accurately monitoring our consumption and through effective collaboration.

What we will do:

- Thanks to smart meters and accurate analyses, we will understand our consumption in detail, which will enable us to make targeted and immediate adjustments.
- We will implement a fixed system for energy management. This way, we continuously keep improving and maintain focus on energy management within the organisation.

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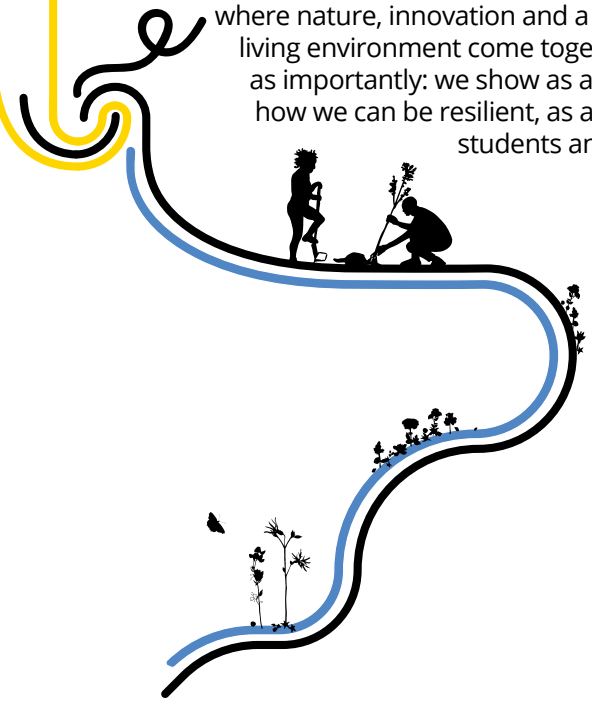
OUR ROUTE TO 2030: HOW WE WORK ON CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Utrecht University (UU) works towards sustainability in all its operations. This plan outlines our goals for climate adaptation and the steps we are taking to achieve them.

Our dream

Imagine: it is 2040. While the thermometer outside keeps rising, our buildings stay pleasantly cool thanks to green roofs and façades. In Utrecht Science Park, trees provide shade on hot days. After a heavy rain shower, the water is not drained into the sewer, but the soil absorbs it like a sponge. This way, the area develops into a green, future-proof campus where nature, innovation and a healthy living environment come together. Just as importantly: we show as a university how we can be resilient, as an example to students and society.



Our ambition

"A university which can withstand the consequences of climate change: we will experience as little damage resulting from extreme rain, heat and drought as possible."

Why is working on climate adaptation important (to us)?

Because of climate change, the chance of extreme weather is becoming bigger and bigger: we are dealing with heavy rain and flooding more frequently, or alternatively with longer periods of drought and extreme heat. This can cause damage to our buildings, infrastructure and equipment. This is why we will modify our buildings so they will remain cool in the summer and can withstand heavy rainfall. And we will turn our outside space into a place which retains water and reduces heat. By investing in green and resilient surroundings now, we can continue to work and study safely and pleasantly. On top of that, such an environment is healthier for humans and animals, and contributes to more biodiversity.

Our approach

1

Climate-proof buildings
In 2030, every construction and renovation project will take the changing climate into account.

What we will do:

- For our buildings on campus and in the inner city, we will investigate the risk of flooding and the chance of damage. We will use this information in renovations and new construction projects in order to take sufficient climate-proof measures.
- We will install green roofs and façades, and use materials which retain less heat.
- We will absorb rainwater into the soil where this is possible, so it will not directly flow into the sewer.

2

Resilient outside spaces
In our outside spaces, there will be sufficient cool places and shaded walking and bicycle routes. In 2040, this will be why the temperature on campus will not feel more than 5 degrees warmer than outside the city.

What we will do:

- We will investigate the risks to our properties in terms of heat, water damage and drought. With our water-simulation model, among other things, we can predict exactly where water remains during extreme rain.
- We will develop a design for a climate-proof landscape for Utrecht Science Park.
- We will remove tiles where this is possible and plant more trees and greenery. This helps against heat and ensures that rainwater can be absorbed into the soil.
- In our living lab at the Heidelberglaan, we will measure the temperature and wind flows to identify areas that are currently becoming unhealthily warm.
- We will plant at least 750 new trees in Utrecht Science Park for shade, cooling and biodiversity.

3

Prepared for extremes
In 2030, we will have an updated emergency plan so we will know what to do during extreme weather in order to safely continue working and studying during storms, heat or drought.

What we will do:

- We will make clear emergency plans and protocols for heat and floods. We will also make agreements with our partners in the area on who will do what.
- We will ensure that our most important facilities (such as electricity and water) will keep working, also during extreme weather.

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OUR ROUTE TO 2030: HOW WE WORK ON CLIMATE MITIGATION

Utrecht University (UU) works towards sustainability in all its operations. This plan outlines our goals for climate mitigation and the steps we are taking to achieve them.

Our dream

Imagine a Utrecht University which no longer emits any carbon emissions. We generate our own energy, our logistics are fully electric and we travel in a conscious way. In our restaurants, you choose from a selection of fair, sustainable food provided by farmers who improve the biodiversity and the soil. We prefer to buy things which last long or can be reused. UU shows that a sustainable future is achievable and that we make the difference together.

Why is working on climate mitigation important (to us)?

Climate mitigation means that we reduce the emission of greenhouse gases (such as carbon emissions) in order to limit global warming. In order to really reduce our impact as a university, we critically look at everything we do: the gas consumption of our buildings, the emissions from our vehicles, the energy we generate or purchase and the emissions generated in the production chains. By becoming more sustainable in all these fields, we will make UU future proof and show that academic ambitions and sustainable operations go hand in hand.

Our ambition

"No later than 2030, our own organisation and our energy consumption will be fully carbon-neutral. In 2035, we will take the next step and our operations will be fully free from natural gas.

Explanation of scopes 1, 2 and 3

Carbon emissions take place in various places in the production chain. In order to chart this, we differentiate between scopes 1, 2 and 3.

Scope 1 comprises carbon emissions from our own sources, such as fuel consumption by corporate vehicles or heating installations.

Scope 2 comprises direct carbon emissions from purchased energy, such as electricity or heat generated elsewhere.

Scope 3 comprises other indirect carbon emissions in the value chain, such as production of purchased materials, transport by third parties, waste processing, commuting and business travel.

UU wants to be carbon-neutral for scopes 1 and 2 in 2030.

Our approach

1

Sustainable energy
In 2030, our energy provision will be carbon-neutral. No later than 2035, we will no longer be using natural gas and all our energy will come from sustainable sources.

What we will do:

- We will make an energy plan and structurally reduce our energy demands.
- We will generate more sustainable energy ourselves with our own solar park, among other things.
- We will manage our buildings and installations more efficiently.

2

Circularity
By 2030, we will have taken big steps in circular working and constructing. Our operations will be fully waste-free and all our buildings will have zero-waste certificates.

What we will do:

- We will extend the lifespans of furniture and IT by means of maintenance and repairs. Replacement is the final option and old items will have a second life within UU or via partners.
- Our purchasing order will be strict: in-company reuse first, purchasing used products next and sustainable new purchase only as a last resort.
- We will collect waste fully separated for reuse. In 2026, our first building will be officially zero-waste, which will serve as a blueprint for the rest of the campus.
- We will work with circular water use and environmentally-friendly resources in our cleaning and facility services.

3

Logistics
In 2030, our own vehicles will be electric wherever possible.

What we will do:

- We will replace old vehicles with electric models, arrange our logistics more efficiently and share vehicles more often.

4

Mobility
Over 80% of our commuting traffic will be on bicycles or by public transport. Flying is avoided where possible.

What we will do:

- We will encourage sustainable travel.
- We will develop an approach to limit our flight travels, so it will become standard to travel shorter distances up to 700 kilometres by train.

5

Digitalization
We will consciously and sparingly use our digital resources. This way, we will limit the growth of data use and the strain on servers.

What we will do:

- We will ensure that our data centres and cloud facilities are as sustainable as possible and run on renewable energy.
- We will use sustainable criteria for the purchase of our ICT equipment.
- We will investigate how older research data can be stored sustainably.

6

Construction and renovation
In new construction, we will ensure that the buildings will generate more energy than they use. In big renovations, we will make them energy-neutral. Small renovations will be done as energy-conserving as possible.

What we will do:

- All construction projects will be realised in line with strict sustainability requirements. We will use sustainable materials and test the energy performances of designs beforehand.
- We will investigate how we can set a maximum to the carbon emissions of our construction assignments and how we can actively guide towards it.

7

Purchase
In 2030, UU will practice 100% circular purchasing, unless doing so is really not possible. We will use the 'R Ladder' for this.

What we will do:

- We will ensure that circular and sustainable purchasing will be applied more and more often, and better within the university.
- For tendering procedures, we will pay attention to sustainability, energy neutrality, biodiversity and future-proof qualities.
- We will encourage suppliers to maintain products, to reuse them or take them back.

8

Food and drinks
In 2030, the range of food and drinks we offer will be more sustainable.

What we will do:

- We will make a strategy for food and drinks, which will be focused on appealing, affordable and sustainable supply.
- We will work together with partners who choose sustainably produced proteins, and help to restore nature and the soil.

9

Carbon-aware decisions
Carbon impact becomes a fixed part of our decision making step by step.

What we will do:

- We will take carbon emissions into account in policy proposals and decisions in the field of energy.
- We will annually calculate our carbon footprint and register the data centrally. We will collaborate with other universities on a clear and uniform way to report carbon emissions.
- We will investigate how we can connect a price to carbon emissions and make policy to compensate these emissions.
- We will ensure that all laboratories have sustainability certificates.

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