TRANSFORM4EUROPE:

THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY FOR KNOWLEDGE ENTREPRENEURS

Green Campus Handbook

Green Campus Code of Conduct

As members of a sustainable academic community, we commit to upholding environmentally responsible practices in all aspects of campus life. Our shared responsibility is to reduce our environmental footprint and inspire positive change through everyday actions and institutional culture.

Through collective action and conscious choices, we commit to:

- **Respect the environment**

  Treat natural resources with care and avoid unnecessary waste or pollution in daily activities.

- **Acting responsibly**

  Make thoughtful decisions that reduce environmental impact, both individually and collectively.

- **Supporting sustainable practices**

  Encourage and adopt behaviors that promote energy efficiency, waste reduction and responsible consumption.

- **Engaging in the community**

  Participate actively in campus sustainability initiatives, projects and awareness efforts.

- **Promoting a culture of sustainability**

  Lead by example, inspire others, and uphold the values of environmental stewardship in academic and social life.

Together, we strive to create a green campus that contributes to the well-being of people and the planet, now and for future generations.

Sustainability Guidelines and Environmental Commitment

Contribution to Sustainable Development and Well-being

The goal of this handbook is to contribute to sustainable societal development and the improvement of public well-being through high-level international research-based education, development, creative work and innovative services based on these activities.

Environmental Monitoring and Minimisation of Negative Impact

Environmental indicators are used to monitor both direct and indirect environmental aspects and impacts of activities, with the aim of reducing negative environmental effects.

Environmental Protection and Sustainable Mobility

Key priorities include the efficient use of natural resources, prevention of environmental pollution, minimization of emissions, environmental restoration and the promotion of environmentally friendly modes of transport.

Waste Reduction and Separate Collection

Environmentally responsible practices are implemented to prevent and reduce waste, enable waste sorting and promote reuse, cross-use and recycling wherever possible.

Saving Energy, Water, Paper, Materials and Data Resources

Efforts are made to reduce excessive consumption of electricity, heating, ventilation, water, paper, materials and digital storage. The focus is on enhancing quality, durability, naturalness, cost-efficiency and functionality.

Raising Environmental Awareness

There is a strong understanding of the role as a driver of change, guiding staff, students and society toward more environmentally conscious, ethical, innovative, practical and functional solutions in response to global challenges.

1. Introduction

Welcome to the **Green Campus Handbook**, a practical guide designed to support students, faculty and staff in creating a more environmentally friendly campus. The global need for sustainability (including environmental responsibility) is rapidly growing. As a response, we have developed this guide with a mission of helping people embed the said responsibility into their everyday lives, thus contributing to sustainability. Sustainability is a shared responsibility of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the future generations to meet their own needs. Therefore, it involves maintaining the balance between environmental health, economic viability, and social well-being - the three main pillars of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social. The university communities are asked to assure sustainable decisions, including contributing to a greener future, which enhances social well-being and foster economic viability for present and future generations. Together, we can create a lasting impact on the environment, enhance social well-being and foster economic viability for present and future generations.

Why sustainability on campus matters

Universities are more than places of education and research; they are vibrant communities with significant environmental footprints. Every decision on campus, including food sourcing, waste management and transportation choices, influences climate change, biodiversity and public health.

Sustainability is not a simple standalone project; it is a culture that has embedded itself into campus life and encourages individuals to integrate sustainable practices into their daily routines. Sustainability drives innovation in teaching, research and community life. A university environment where sustainability is a shared value helps its students become responsible leaders who will navigate and address the complexities of a changing world, making choices that positively impact the planet and future generations.

Green Campuses particularly strives to:

- Save energy and resources.
- Create healthier and more beautiful environments.

- Enhance learning environments, making them more comfortable and productive for students.
- Prepare communities for the challenges of climate change.
- Influence society by setting examples of leadership.

What you'll find in this handbook

This handbook provides straightforward, simple steps that anyone can implement in their lives, along with resources that help you to initiate or participate in more significant projects. You'll discover everyday habits to help minimise your environmental footprint, along with checklists for organising greener events, classes and office environments. It offers mobility advice for eco-friendly travel and tips on sustainable procurement and purchasing practices, where a special attention is given to construction and refurbishment of university spaces. Additionally, you'll find creative ideas for protecting biodiversity and green spaces, complemented by inspiring success stories from various universities.

Every step matters and, over time, will collectively have a positive impact.

Our commitment

Our T4EU alliance is committed to:

- Achieving excellence in environmental responsibility.
- Supporting low-carbon, circular economy solutions.
- Fostering biodiversity and nature protection.
- Building inclusive and resilient academic communities.

We encourage and invite students, teachers, staff, researchers and future partners from every campus to be a part of this journey.

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2. Everyday Sustainable Habits

2.1 Why it matters

Every choice we make, no matter how insignificant it seems, has an impact. We must recognise how our choices affect the world and how our actions result in unnecessary and entirely avoidable consequences. For example, lights left on overnight across campus can waste enough electricity to power a small village. We don't often think about digital clutter, such as emails, files and cloud storage, but that clutter consumes vast amounts of electricity in data centers daily. People being more conscious of the environmental impacts of their actions and behaviours can make a difference.

Small habits repeated by hundreds or thousands of people drive real change.

2.2 Sustainable habits on campus

Habit	Why It Matters	Practical Tip
Turn off lights and electronics	Reduces electricity consumption and therefore GHG emissions.	Last one out? Switch off the light!
Use heating, cooling, and natural ventilation sensibly	Reduces energy consumption and therefore GHG emissions.	Observe outside temperature and relative humidity. Whenever sensible, use natural (e.g., open a window) rather than mechanical ventilation.
Use reusable bottles, cups, bags	Avoids single-use plastics.	Keep a reusable kit in your backpack.

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Drink from water fountains or, if possible, tap water	Saves money and reduces plastic.	Tap water is safe in most EU countries!
Move sustainably	Reduces CO_2 emissions.	Walk, bike, carpool, use scooters, or public transport.
Sort your waste	Ensures recycling actually happens.	Learn your campus waste rules.
Eat plant-based meals	Lowers carbon footprint dramatically.	Try "Meatless Mondays" or "Vegan Fridays".
Print only when necessary	Saves paper and energy.	Use digital notes and collaborative online docs.
Declutter/reduce your digital life	Reduces energy use in cloud storage and unuseful data traffic.	Every month, empty your trash folders. Minimise unnecessary social media posts.
Look for environmentally friendly hobbies or practice already existing hobbies in a sustainable way	Reduce energy use, waste and CO_2 emissions.	Borrow from the library or read used books. Engage in outdoor physical activities such as cycling, hiking or running.

2.3 Sustainable dorm and office life

In your dorm room:

Televisions, video and audio equipment

- Keep televisions, video games, stereos and other similar devices switched off if you are not using them because, in addition to wasting energy, they suffer greater wear and tear.
- Turn on the TV only when you are going to use it.
- Keep the lighting levels low in the area where the TV is located; this will reduce reflections on the screen and conserve energy on lighting.

Microwave

- Always keep the microwave clean of debris.
- Do not overheat the food; use the correct temperature for each type of food.
- Check the door seals to ensure no damage could waste heat.

Energy label

- When purchasing electrical appliances, it is crucial to consider their energy consumption. Choose the most efficient appliance.

Fridge usage

- Share mini-fridges with roommates if possible. By doing that you are avoiding double energy use.
- Make sure that the back of the fridge and freezer is always clean and ventilated (if it is dirty, it can increase consumption by 15%).
- Keep the door seals in good condition so that they close tightly.
- Place the fridge or freezer in a ventilated, cool location and as far away as possible from heat sources (ovens, radiators, etc.) or areas frequently exposed to sunlight.
- Do not include hot elements and to prevent losing cold, open and close the door quickly. A few seconds are enough to lose most of the accumulated cold.
- Keep the fridge at a suitable temperature, as specified by the manufacturer's instructions (each degree lower increases consumption by 5%).
- If frost forms, defrost it to prevent overworking it.

When cooking

- Use containers with a larger bottom surface than the fire you are using and cover pans. You will save up to 20% of energy.

- Keep gas burners clean: the reddish colour of the flame indicates poor combustion and gas loss.
- Use the express cooker: you will save time and use half the energy.
- Lower the heat once the food comes to a boil, as gentle cooking helps maintain the nutritional properties and saves energy.
- In electric cookers, take advantage of the residual heat and turn them off five minutes before finishing (the same applies to the oven).
- Try using the microwave instead of the oven; this can save between 50% and 60% of the energy.
- Use the maximum capacity of the oven and avoid opening the door unnecessarily.

When using the dishwasher/ washing up

- Use the dishwasher if possible instead of washing by hand. You can save up to 60 % of your water consumption.
- Use the dishwasher when it is full (if you need to use it half-loaded, use economic programmes).
- Remember that heating water accounts for a large part of the dishwasher's consumption (if you run it on cold, you can save up to 75%).

When washing laundry

- Try to wash with low-temperature programmes (a large part of the energy consumed is used to heat the water); a wash at 90º C consumes almost twice as much energy as at 60º C.
- If you have a night-time tariff, try to use the washing machine during those hours.
- Try not to wash half loads (wait until you have enough laundry to fill the washing machine) and use the appropriate programme.
- Clean the water filters regularly and monitor the maintenance of the equipment. You will achieve the best performance from your appliance while minimising energy consumption.
- Air dry clothes instead of using dryers. Saves electricity and increases the longevity of clothes.

Responsible consumption

- Buy products in family packs.
- Buy products in bulk.
- Buy concentrated products: the concentrated solution yields more, so you will need to buy less quantity, and you will avoid generating the corresponding packaging waste.
- Avoid buying products with excess packaging.

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- Avoid disposable products
- Consider the quality and durability of the products you buy, as well as the waste they will generate later.
- Refuse plastic bags you don't need and use your own shopping bag or trolley.
- Eco-cleanliness. Eco-cleanliness involves maintaining clean and healthy environments in a way that minimises harm to the planet. This means using biodegradable, non-toxic cleaning products that are safe for both people and ecosystems. Instead of disposable wipes or paper towels, opt for reusable cloths and mops that reduce waste. Eco-cleanliness also means respecting shared spaces and making it a habit to leave public areas cleaner than you found them.
- Sustainable fashion consumption
- Decorate with second-hand items or DIY upcycled projects. Lowers waste and supports a circular economy mindset.

In your office or classroom:

Printing and paper usage

- Reuse scrap paper for notes. Lessens paper waste and maximises resource use.
- Hold "paperless meetings." Share materials or agendas digitally and reduce unnecessary paper waste.
- Print only when necessary and use double-sided printing. It minimises paper consumption and reduces energy consumption.
- Set printers and copiers to eco-mode. Doing so saves paper, energy and ink.
- Use recycled paper. Supports the circular economy.

Lighting and energy

- Make the most of natural light. Keep blinds open during daylight hours to reduce reliance on artificial lighting.
- Close window blinds when you leave to conserve energy and/or leave the window open to reduce temperature during the night.
- Switch off lights when not in use. Reduces pointless energy consumption.
- Use LED lighting: these lights are as powerful as halogen lights but use 80% less energy and last five times longer.
- Install motion-sensor lights in less-used areas. Helps avoid energy waste in infrequently occupied rooms such as storage spaces.

Electronics and appliances

- Unplug devices that are not used daily. Appliances still draw power when plugged in.

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- Use smart power strips. They reduce power usage by shutting down power to products that go into standby mode.
- Enable energy-saving settings on electronics. Adjust sleep modes and dim displays.
- Shut down computers during longer breaks. Even in sleep mode computers use energy.
- Choose energy-efficient office equipment.

Heating, cooling and ventilation

- Avoid blocking air vents or radiators with furniture. That ensures efficient air circulation and less wasted energy.
- Use fans or blinds to regulate room temperature naturally. Helps manage thermal comfort without increasing the energy usage.
- Keep windows open when possible. Natural fresh air reduces reliance on ventilation systems.

Sustainable supplies

- Buy in bulk and choose minimal packaging. Reduces both cost and waste.
- Use refillable whiteboard markers instead of disposable ones. Reduces plastic waste.
- Opt for durable long-lasting supplies over cheap disposables. Reducing the need to replace supplies also reduces waste.

Waste management

- Set up clear recycling stations with labels. Encourages waste sorting and recycling by making it easy and understandable.
- Encourage reusable cutlery, straws and containers. Doing so reduces plastic and general waste production in an office environment.

Workplace environment

- Encourage a tidy and clutter-free environment. Minimises unnecessary supply use.
- Keeping a small plant - indoor plants improve air quality.

2.4 Practical ideas, tools and tips

You can't manage what you don't track: we can monitor our behaviour and limit environmentally harmful activities in various ways. As we have established, sometimes things we don't even think about often could significantly influence our climate. Therefore, keeping a physical or a mental checklist that helps you stay more conscious of your environmental footprint could be very beneficial. The checklist does not need to be something complex; rather, it serves as a reminder of what to add to your daily routine.

For example, here are a few points that could be on a checklist:

- Did you turn off the unused lights?
- Did you drink from your reusable bottle?
- Did you walk, bike, or carpool today?
- Did you sort your waste correctly?
- Did you avoid unnecessary printing?

https://www.pef.upr.si/sl/koledar-dogodkov/2024031114593847/teden-vode-na-up-pef

If the checklist method is not for you, then another way to keep an eye on your environmental footprint is to discipline yourself with maybe a single rule to follow. Start with something simple to start building an energy-conscious mindset. For example, set a rule to always turn off all the electronics and lights if you leave the room for longer than 5-10 minutes.

If some people have trouble finding time for these kinds of habits or, in general, don't have a single routine they follow, then there are environmentally conscious choices they can make, too. Schedule ahead and pick a day and time when you look through your email, files and digital clutter. Inboxes are often filled with pointless and unnecessary spam, files and letters. This, however, results in enormous energy waste and therefore, deleting clutter could already improve your environmental footprint.

Last but not least, there are also countless apps that help people maintain an eco-friendly lifestyle. Here are some examples:

- **Olio** is an app that helps reduce food waste by connecting people located near each other. If people have spare food they don't want, then they can take a picture of it and offer it to someone else.
- **Too Good To Go** is another example of an app that reduces food waste, although in a different way. Through the app, restaurants, bakeries and shops can offer food that is still good to eat but which they have to throw away at the end of the day at half-price.
- **Giki Zero** helps you calculate your carbon footprint and then find ways to live more sustainably. In a nutshell, it is a customised manual that assists people in lowering their carbon footprint by providing simple, doable tips to promote more eco-friendly decisions in daily life. It provides frequent updates of fresh suggestions for how each user can combat climate change. Additionally, it promotes community involvement.

- **Forkranger** is an application for education on personal behaviour to reduce personal footprint. "Our mission is to make it as easy as possible to eat for the climate. We use data and storytelling to show which choices matter most and develop easy recipes to put knowledge into action."
- **Ecotastic** is an app that rewards you for your environmentally-friendly actions. You gather points for eco-friendly actions and compete with other users of the app.
- **Ecosia** is a sustainable app that aims to promote reforestation and support conversation through the use of the search engine.
- **BlaBlaCar** is an app for carpooling.
- **Depop** is an app that facilitates the buying and selling of second-hand clothing.
- **Vinted** is an app that encourages people to declutter their closets by selling second-hand clothing.
- **JouleBug** is an employee engagement mobile app that educates and mobilises your people to take action toward your company's sustainability goals.
- **Carbon Footprint & CO2 Tracker** is a CO2 tracker that helps you learn more about emissions from everyday mobility and dietary choices.
- **Earth Hero** is an scientifically grounded app to empower all who want to reduce emissions.

2.5 "Quick start" for new students and staff

Your **First Actions** on a Green Campus:

1. Bring your reusable cup, bottle and bag.
2. Find your nearest recycling stations.
3. Try one plant-based meal at the cafeteria every second day or every day.
4. Walk or cycle your way around campus.
5. Switch off the lights and screens.
6. Tidy your inbox - delete, sort and stay organised.

No matter how reluctant you are to start or how much you doubt yourself, Anne-Marie Bonneau reminds us: "We don't need a handful of people doing sustainability perfectly. We need millions doing it imperfectly."

3. Sustainable Event Planning

3.1 Why greener events matter

Compared to regular days, big events can generate 10–50% more waste, which significantly impacts our environment. Single-use plastics and printed materials contribute heavily to the carbon footprint, making sustainability a crucial point for event organisers to consider. Additionally, food waste at catered events poses a major global issue that cannot be overlooked. By organising green events, universities can save resources and money and set an example of environmental leadership. These initiatives foster healthier, more inclusive and engaging experiences for attendees, ultimately promoting a culture of sustainability while minimising waste.

3.2 Green event planning guide

Step	What to do	Practical tip
Plan early	Integrate sustainability from the beginning.	Assign a "Green Coordinator" for each event.
Select eco-friendly venues	Choose locations that are certified green or have good public transport access.	Always check energy use and waste facilities!
Reduce travel emissions	Offer hybrid participation, encourage train travel.	Highlight low-carbon travel options on the event website.

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Avoid single-use items	Use real dishes, reusable name tags and cloth banners.	Borrow or rent equipment instead of buying new. Or create one that can be reused or adapted each year for your recurring event (e.g., a large totem).
Choose sustainable catering	Local, seasonal, plant-based menus are best.	Label vegan and vegetarian options clearly.
Choose local partners and suppliers	Prioritise working with service providers located near your campus or event venue.	Ask for quotes from local businesses first, it reduces transport emissions and supports the local economy.
Communicate green goals	Tell participants about your eco-efforts.	Post green event tips at registration desks.
Promote sustainability through your event	Get your event certified with a "Green Event" label.	Look for local or institutional eco-certification programs and include the label in your event communication.
Manage waste carefully	Set up clearly labeled recycling and composting bins.	Have volunteers help guests sort correctly.
Reduce cigarette waste	Set up a system to collect and recycle cigarette butts.	Partner with a specialised company that recycles cigarette waste.

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Protocol/Plan for food leftovers	Establish a protocol/plan for managing the food leftovers, promoting food-sharing whenever possible.	Partner with the catering company/ service to follow this plan.
Reduce paper consumption	Add a QR to everyone's name badge, which leads to the website with the event programme. On this website, you can add information about the catering menus. Keep the programme updated at all times, with all the necessary information, without the need to print it after each modification.	Encourage the use of the QR (what will also be useful to communicate your project). Insert links on the website with the location of the venues where the activities will take place.
Calculate the carbon footprint of the event	Collects all the necessary information in the event registration process: place of origin and means of transport (and if it is by car, whether it is shared or not).	Calculate the electricity consumed in the rooms used and the energy from fossil fuels.
Calculate the carbon footprint of suppliers and caterers.	Offset the carbon footprint of the event.	Collaborate with a CO2 Offset Project for tree planting.
Recover of conference lanyards	Most people already have too many conference lanyards that will not be used later.	Provide a basket to recover the conference lanyards at the end of the conference.

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3.3 Real-world examples from universities

Example 1: Green Erasmus Week at Estonian Academy of Arts (EKA)

During the T4EU Week in EKA (June 2023), the planners aimed to make as sustainable choices as possible. Participants were encouraged to bring reusable thermoses for coffee breaks. People were encouraged to drink tap water more. At least one 100% plant-based food option was offered daily to reduce food waste during catering. Foods with meat were made with local ingredients. Leftover food was placed in a food-sharing cupboard. The event planners also offered hotels that were located within walking distance of the EKA building. Tallinn also made public transportation free for participants during the event, which was meant to reduce carbon emissions. In conclusion the event was successful and attendees generated less waste during the T4EU Week.

Example 2: Student associations (UJM)

At UJM, the student association AFASE has implemented a "Green Event" label to encourage eco-responsible initiatives. When a student association organises an event that meets specific sustainability criteria, such as waste reduction, the use of local partners, or the promotion of soft mobility, the event can be labeled as eco-friendly. In recognition of this commitment, the association is eligible to receive a €100 grant.
This incentive supports student engagement while promoting the principles of sustainable development within campus life.

Example 3: Organising events with a sustainable mindset at UCP

At UCP, we are working on a sustainable mindset for the organisation of the events from scratch: promoting people to use fewer cars to come to the event (if possible, organise transfers to go to campus, avoiding more taxis or own vehicles, for instance), using QR codes on the badges instead of having the programme in paper mode, offering the opportunity of using pens, instead of giving pens to everyone, promoting more sustainable coffee breaks and assuring that the non-used food is given to ReFood project (that distributes every evening lots of meals for needed people), asking participants to donate money or goods for social partners we have, giving useful institutional offers so that they do not become trash (and give them if strictly needed)

Example 4: Organising international events at UP

For each event organised at UP, sustainable guidelines are followed, including the use of low-carbon travel options when available, selecting eco-friendly accommodations within walking distance, minimising waste through the use of reusable materials and responsible catering practices, promoting plant-based and locally sourced meals, ensuring clear waste sorting, and respecting the local community and environment.

Example 5: World Water Day celebration at the UP

Provides an opportunity to reflect on various current topics related to water (in the third week of March). It highlights the importance of water and advocates for the sustainable management of water resources, recognising that the quality of our lives and the existence of life itself depend on water. Sustainable water management offers numerous benefits, including improved health, food and energy security, protection against natural disasters, enhanced living standards, economic development and various ecosystem services. (https://www.pef.upr.si/sl/koledar-dogodkov/2024031114593847/teden-vode-na-up-pef)

3.4 Green catering guidelines

Prefer:

- Seasonal, local, organic food.
- Fair Trade-certified coffee, tea and chocolate.
- Plant-based dishes as default.
- Tap water in glass jugs (no bottled water).
- Reusable plates, cutlery and glasses.

Avoid:

- Individual plastic-wrapped snacks.
- Single-use cups, plates, or cutlery.
- Over-ordering food (track guest numbers closely).
- Non-organic food
- Food imported from far-away countries
- Industrial food

- **Tip:** If food is left over, have a plan: donate to local shelters, offer to staff/students, or compost.

3.5 Templates for practical use

Green event checklist - copy and paste for your own use.

Task	Status
Have you assigned a Green Coordinator?	
Is your venue accessible by public transport?	
Are you avoiding printed materials?	
Have you organised sustainable catering?	
Are reusable dishes and cups available?	
Are waste stations set up and labeled?	
Are carbon emissions from travel minimised?	
Will you measure your event's environmental impact afterward?	
Do people who travel by bicycle have good visibility over the other participants?	
Have you developed a plan for managing the food leftovers and encouraging food-sharing?	

3.6 Bonus: Communicating your sustainable event

For your green event to truly work and be sustainable, you need to let people know what the aim of the event is. Let the participants know they are part of something bigger. There are many ways to do that. Before the event, it would be beneficial to promote it as a green event.

Use hashtags like #GreenCampus #SustainableEvents. Send people who bought tickets an email, filling them in on the benefits of sustainability and why it's important to think about our carbon footprint. During the event, you can mention it as you welcome people and bring attention to people and businesses who helped you sustainably organise the event. That benefits you and helps increase people's knowledge of green companies; it works as a cross-promotion for a greater cause.

Social media promotion: Use hashtags like #GreenCampus #SustainableEvents #Transform4Europe

4. Sustainable Mobility

4.1 Why sustainable mobility matters

Short-haul flights are one of the most carbon-intensive travel options, producing 7 to 11 times more CO_2 per kilometer than trains. This distinct contrast emphasises the importance of choosing low-emission alternatives whenever possible. A person's choice to switch from commuting by car to cycling can reduce their annual carbon emissions by up to 67%. That makes it one of the most impactful lifestyle changes an individual can make. Beyond the climate benefits, biking and walking also contribute to better physical and mental health, help individuals save money and play a key role in reducing air pollution in cities and on campus.

Universities and colleges have an opportunity to be an example of how sustainability and a person's well-being go hand in hand. They can underline the need for a sustainability culture, therefore raising concerns for the existing infrastructure and taking one step further toward easy and safe sustainable transport options.

4.2 How you can travel greener

Action	Impact	Practical Tip
Walk	0 emissions, improved health.	Find safe pedestrian routes on campus maps.
Cycle	Zero emissions, fast and fun, the most efficient among means of transport.	Join a campus bike-sharing program or second-hand bike group. Learn how to ride more efficiently from those more expert.

Public transport	80% lower emissions vs. cars.	Get a student discount travel card if available.
Carpool	Share rides, split costs, cut emissions.	Use a ridesharing app or university carpool board.
Scooters and e-bikes	Low-carbon, convenient.	Always wear a helmet and park responsibly!
Travel by train	90% lower emissions vs. flying.	Choose Erasmus Green Travel options when possible.
Set up Hybrid work days	Reduce emissions by avoiding transportation.	Setup policy to encourage work from home if/when possible
Promote the electric charge for the community	Stimulate electrical charging.	Install electric charger on the campus
Promote the self energy provision	Lower the dependence on external energy by using solar power and creating shadows for the cars at the same time.	Install solar panels in parking lots, promoting the production of solar energy and creating shadows for cars.

4.3 Real-world examples from universities

Example 1: Erasmus Green Travel bonus

Erasmus+ offers €50 extra and up to 4 additional travel days if you choose sustainable travel modes like trains, buses, or carpooling instead of flying.

Tip: Always ask your Erasmus coordinator about the Green Travel bonus before booking your trip.

Example 2: Bike infrastructure at University of Alicante (UA) and Saarbrücken (USAAR)

UA has installed more than 500 secure bike parking spots and long cycling tracks on campus. To further encourage people to travel sustainably there are bike repair stations on campus. UA also organises "Bike to Campus Day" campaigns: free breakfast if you arrive by bike. "Bike to Campus Day" is actually an event that is popular in other universities besides UA too.

USAAR is gold-certified as a bike-friendly employer. There are approximately 500 bike parking spots and three bike service points, and an annual bike day is organised with breakfast for bikers, repair stations, bike providers, etc. USAAR also participated in the "city biking challenge" and won the first prize in 2024.

Example 3: Public transport passes in Tallinn (EKA) and in Saarbrücken (USAAR)

During T4EU Week in EKA, free public transport passes were provided for all participants. Besides the event week the City of Tallinn offers free public transportation for registered residents. This was also done during the Strategic Assembly in Saarbrücken. USAAR provided name badges to the participants in the event which also included public transport passes for the days of the event duration.

Tip: Highlight nearby bus/tram routes on your event invitations or campus guides.

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Example 4 : Getting Around in Saint-Étienne, Sustainable Mobility Support (UJM)

The University of Jean Monnet offers several types of support to encourage eco-friendly transportation:

- Financial aid is available for the purchase of a bike or scooter, as well as safety equipment (such as helmets and locks), through the Campus Life support fund.
- Free bike loans: a fleet of 30 bikes is available for students, including all necessary safety gear.
- "Bike Market" at the beginning of the academic year during the Festi'VE event – an excellent opportunity to buy or sell a bike at a low price.
- Partnership with STAS (Saint-Étienne's public transport network): 2 months of free subscription for new users, available at their stand during Festi'VE.

Example 5: Electric Charge and Solar Panels (UCP)

At UCP have been installed several smart charging points to enhance the consumption of electric solutions in cars (since 2018).

On the other hand, solar panels have been installed in the external parking area which collects solar energy for self-consumption and provides good shade for the cars.

4.4 Sustainable commuting challenges and ideas

Car-free days: Designate special days when staff and students avoid using personal cars to drive to campus.

Buddy biking programs: Match new students with experienced cycling students for their first week.

Bike coordinator/instructor: Create an email box to answer questions related to cycling. Select one or more skilled persons, coming from the cycling federation, that support the use of the **most efficient** among urban means of transport.

Step challenges and mobility games: Organize annual step-count contests, photo competitions (e.g., themed around cycling), and other playful initiatives to encourage walking and soft mobility in a fun and engaging way.

4.5 Tools and resources

Apps supporting sustainable travel:

BlaBlaCar: Encourages carpooling across Europe. The app connects drivers and passengers who are willing to drive together. Since carpool is one of the ways with which we can avoid unnecessary carbon emissions

Green Erasmus: The Green Erasmus Portal has been developed by the Green Erasmus project to provide students with concrete information on how to be sustainable before, during and after their Erasmus experience. While some actions are generally well-known, other aspects are often overlooked and/or students do not exactly know how to make their Erasmus exchanges greener, which can be difficult.

Erasmus Goes Green CO_2 Calculator: Using the calculator helps people plan future trips by calculating how big the emission amount would be. If the trip has already happened, the app is a way to learn what you could have done differently. It also helps people be more conscious of their choices when traveling in the future.

Other tools include various maps of safe cycling routes that exist on the internet, but that is, of course, sometimes limited by the location of the campus. Public transport maps and ticket discount lists are helpful when traveling longer distances. The third option is to place a carpool board for students and staff on campus grounds.

Bikeability: The website is an example of a resource that can help people develop skills and form habits in cycling. Bikeability is the government's national cycle training programme. It allows people in the UK to learn practical skills and understand how to cycle on today's roads.

4.6 Green travel for Erasmus and research trips

When traveling internationally for study, research or conferences:

Prefer:

- Trains or buses (especially within Europe).
- Low-cost night trains.
- Carpooling for short regional trips.

Avoid when possible:

- Short-haul flights (<500 km).
- Flights with multiple layovers (double emissions from multiple takeoffs/landings).

Tip for Erasmus students:

When possible, plan your trip as an "Eco-Adventure":

- Take slow trains.
- Stop in interesting green cities on the way.
- Document your low-carbon journey.

4.7 Measuring and celebrating green mobility

Organise goals to motivate students and faculty to increase their usage of sustainable transportation. For example, set campus targets, such as having 30% of students commuting by bike by 2030. Celebrate milestones and take things further with bike fairs, public transport days or by sharing eco-travel awards to people on campus.

5. Reducing and Managing Waste

5.1 Why waste management matters

Over 30% of the average campus waste could be composted or recycled, highlighting the significant opportunity for improvement in our waste management practices. Furthermore, digital waste, which includes unneeded emails and files, is an invisible yet growing contributor to carbon emissions, driven by energy-hungry data centers. By reducing both physical and digital waste, we not only save money but also protect our precious natural resources, setting a sustainable standard for future generations. Creating a zero-waste mindset across campus is achievable through simple, coordinated actions that engage the entire community in fostering environmentally responsible habits. Together, we can make a meaningful impact and promote a more sustainable future.

5.2 Campus waste hierarchy

Follow these priorities, from best to least preferred.

1. **Refuse** unnecessary items (e.g., flyers, single-use giveaways).
2. **Reduce** consumption (e.g., only print what's needed).
3. **Reuse** materials (e.g., refillable pens, reusable coffee cups).
4. **Repurpose** creatively (e.g., old banners turned into bags).
5. **Recycle** correctly (e.g., paper, plastic, metals sorted properly).
6. **Recover energy** (e.g., waste-to-energy programs where available).
7. **Landfill** only as a last resort.

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5.3 Practical actions for students and staff

Action	Why it matters	How to do it
Bring reusables	Cuts plastic waste immediately.	Carry a reusable cup, bottle, cutlery set and shopping bag.
Sort waste properly	Ensures recycling happens.	Know your local colour codes (paper, plastic, bio-waste, mixed).
Host swap events	Extends product life.	Organise clothing or book swaps instead of buying new.
Repair, don't replace	Reduces e-waste and material use.	Attend or organise repair cafés on campus.
Digital decluttering	Cuts data center emissions.	Delete old files, emails and apps every semester.
Zero waste events	Lead by example.	Avoid single-use items when hosting meetings or parties.
Office Swap day	Extends product life	Organise garage office swap for any office material no longer in use.

Book boxes	Reduces paper waste.	Organise book box recycling. Libraries receive many book boxes that can be reused to mail books and other materials.

5.4 Real-world examples from universities

Example 1: Student-led environmental actions at UJM

Each year, student associations organise clean walks on and around campus to raise awareness about environmental issues and promote collective action for a cleaner environment. These walks encourage students to actively participate in litter collection while fostering a sense of community and responsibility.

Additionally, campus coffee machines are programmed to offer discounted prices when students bring their own reusable cups, promoting sustainable habits and reducing single-use waste.

Example 2: Digital cleanup day at EKA

Students and staff organised a voluntary "Digital Cleanup." Collectively students and faculty deleted thousands of old emails, files and unused apps. As a result people saved an increased amount of CO_2 by reducing server use.

Example 3: UA Reutiliza at University of Alicante

The "UA Reutiliza" program is an initiative of the University of Alicante, managed by the Ecocampus Office, which promotes the reuse of computer equipment, furniture and other equipment that still has a useful life and can be repurposed for the same purpose for which it was designed. UA Reutiliza is intended for both the University of Alicante's own units for internal reuse at the UA, as well as for non-profit entities in the province of Alicante (ESAL) and other educational centers. It aligns with three specific goals: sustainability, social responsibility and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Example 4: USAAR clean-up day and waste disposal system

In March, USAAR participated in the yearly Picobello event, a collaborative effort where employees and students came together to clean the campus.

Since December 2009, UdS has implemented an eco-friendly and cost-effective waste disposal system tailored to its needs. In 2011, this system was recognised as a best-practice model by the HIS Institute for University Development. Waste is sorted at the source using various containers, including a three-color system for paper, residual waste, and dual-system waste. Hazardous waste, such as chemical waste generated through research activities, is properly disposed of by the Department ZB, ensuring compliance with legal requirements and ease of use for university members. To better illustrate the idea of the three-coloured waste separation, a movie was developed. Click here: [Abfallkampagne: Recycling und mehr an der Universität des Saarlandes](#)

5.5 How to set up a waste-smart campus

Infrastructure

- Waste sorting stations in every building and common area.
- Clear, colour-coded signage (multilingual if needed).
- Specific bins for:
    - Paper
    - Plastics
    - Metals
    - Glass
    - Bio-waste (organic)
    - Deposit packages (bottle refund system)
    - Hazardous waste (batteries, electronics)
- Partnering with the canteens to ensure that they make suitable disposal of the waste and particularly ensure that food leftovers and trash are disposed of at the organic bin (and when possible, encourage composting).

Education

- Organise yearly workshops or training courses on "How to Recycle Right."
- Highlight the importance of correct waste disposal during the Welcome Week to the university (e.g., welcome package with explanatory information, informative exhibition, stands, sessions, etc.).
- Include waste guidelines in orientation packages for new students and staff.

- Visual campaigns: posters, digital screens, competitions.

Incentives

- Eco-points or certificates for departments or dorms reducing the most waste.
- Prize draws (e.g., win a bike!) for participating in waste reduction challenges.

6. Energy and Digital Sustainability

6.1 Why energy and digital sustainability matter

Energy production plays a critical role in the ongoing challenge of global CO_2 emissions, being one of the biggest contributors to this environmental crisis. As our reliance on digital services increases, data centers, which are responsible for storing enormous amounts of information, from emails to videos, already consume approximately 3% of the world's electricity, which is expected to rise rapidly. Additionally, institutions like universities significantly contribute to energy consumption due to their extensive use of lighting, heating, cooling systems, computers and servers. This combination of factors underscores the urgent need to seek sustainable energy solutions and improve energy efficiency across all sectors.

6.2 Practical actions for energy efficiency

Action	Why it matters	Practical tip
Turn off lights and devices	Saves electricity instantly.	Last one out = lights off! Use reminder stickers.
Use natural light	Reduces lighting needs.	Sit near windows for meetings or study.
Smart heating and cooling	Cuts energy waste.	Set thermostats to eco-friendly ranges (19–21°C in winter, 25–26°C in summer).
Switch to LED lighting	Up to 80% more efficient.	Request LED upgrades in dorms and offices.
Enable energy-saving modes	Devices use less power.	Use "eco mode" on printers, projectors, computers.
Green building operations	Sustainable infrastructure matters.	Advocate for smart meters, solar panels, better insulation.

Technology and Automation	Reduce energy waste and promote more efficient energy use.	Advocate for (1) the installation of motion sensors in hallways, bathrooms and classrooms to automatically turn off lights; (2) the implementation of smart plugs in laboratories and offices that cut power to unused equipment; (3) the establishment of a consumption monitoring system visible to the community (e.g., screens in hallways showing real time consumption).
Use layers of clothing	Reduce energy needs.	By adapting to temperature with layers of clothing, less energy is needed to heat or cool spaces

6.3 Real-world examples from universities

Example 1: EKA's Smart Campus Upgrade

Since 2023, EKA has powered itself with 100% green electricity, a significant step towards sustainability. They have installed solar panels on rooftops to enhance their energy efficiency further, harnessing renewable energy from our buildings. Additionally, implementing building-wide motion-sensor lighting and smart heating controls has optimised energy usage throughout our campus. As a result of these initiatives, they have achieved an estimated 25% reduction in overall electricity use, showcasing their commitment to a greener future.

Example 2: UA's Energy Strategy

Since 2017, UA has calculated its carbon footprint in order to objectively quantify the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions generated by the various activities carried out by the organisation. This has allowed the institution to identify options for improvement, develop action plans to reduce and/or compensate for GHG emissions and mitigate climate change. The success of this initiative can be explained by: (1) The calculation has been done every year since 2017 (allowing for comparison); (2) Human and material resources endowed; and (3) infrastructure and monitoring sensors and platforms in place that allow the compilation and analysis of the required data. This has subsequently resulted in a series of initiatives and energy strategies:

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1. The institution has an obligation to contract electricity only from renewable sources. This policy/strategy derivates in the Carbon Footprint Scope 2 being equal to 0 since 2019.

2. Photovoltaic installations. On the one hand, UA has 1 Grid-connected photovoltaic plant. It also has several energy self-consumption spots in the areas of Aulario II, the parking lot of the petrology building, the Business Creation Centre and the anatomy building. Finally, from 2024, the university is under the project of expanding solar panel installation to 8 buildings, resulting in 2MWp; 3,612 photovoltaic modules installed; 3,088MWh annual production; 772 tCO2/year CO2 emissions reduction (equivalent to the absorption capacity of 4,625 trees/year); and, most importantly: 15,35% of contribution to the annual energy consumption of the buildings.

Example 3: USAAR's Energy Savers

At USAAR, a group of employees have initiated a participatory group and campaign to save energy in the buildings. Over one hundred (100!) voluntary energy savers ensure that energy consumption is kept as low as possible and that avoidable energy consumption is minimised in the individual buildings.

Example 4: UJM's multi-campus energy monitoring and commitment to low-carbon transition

The University of Jean Monnet is gradually implementing a comprehensive approach to energy management and environmental transition across its campuses.

Solar panels have been installed on the Manufacture campus, and a feasibility study is currently underway for the installation of panels on the Tréfilerie campus as part of the renovation of Building D.

The university is also connected to the urban heating network, which helps reduce its reliance on fossil fuels. A monthly monitoring system is in place for all campuses, using building-specific sensors to enable detailed tracking and analysis of energy usage.

Additionally, UJM produces an annual carbon footprint report, going beyond the national requirement of once every three years. As part of this process, students are invited to participate in a survey about their mobility and lifestyle habits in order to better account for their impact on the university's carbon assessment.

6.4 How to save energy in dorms and offices

Easy wins:

- Unplug chargers when not in use.
- Turn off Wi-Fi routers overnight if possible.
- Lower screen brightness.
- Batch cooking to save cooking energy.
- Set computers and printers to automatic "sleep mode."

6.5 How to reduce your digital carbon footprint

Digital activities matter because data storage and streaming use huge amounts of electricity.

Digital habit	Practical actions
Declutter emails	Delete old conversations monthly.
Clean cloud storage	Remove duplicate files and old photos.
Stream efficiently	Download on local disc when possible (not on cloud); lower streaming quality.
Use dark mode	Saves energy on OLED screens.
Use eco-friendly browsers	Example: Ecosia (plants trees while searching).
Less is more	Reduce time spent on social media and upload contents only if necessary.

6.6 Green IT procurement: What to ask for

When buying tech:

- Look for **Energy Star** certified devices. EPA sets energy efficiency specifications and those that meet them can choose to display the ENERGY STAR logo. In turn, consumers and businesses who want to save energy and money can look for the ENERGY STAR label when making buying decisions.
- Check for **EPEAT** or **TCO Certified** labels. Ensure that all the products with the label can be recycled in a safe and sustainable way.
- Prefer refurbished electronics when possible.
- Ensure that the device has a modular design for easier repair and recycling.

6.7 Infrastructure: Long-term campus goals

Universities can:

- Install solar panels on rooftops or parking lots.
- Invest in battery storage and microgrid technology.
- Install smart meters to monitor building-by-building energy use.
- Create Energy Dashboards visible to students and staff to track real-time consumption.
- Monitor Energy Consumption. This brings about different opportunities to the institutions, such as detecting if one item is running when it should not be running (e.g., broken, malfunctioning, etc.), detecting what equipment and actions are more or less efficient and changing them, analyse building occupation rates and take decisions, etc.

6.8 Organising energy awareness campaigns

Ideas:

- "Switch Off Week" challenges.
- Dorm Energy Competitions.

- Workshops on Green IT habits.
- Competition between Faculty on Energy Consumption (the one who used less energy or used it more efficiently and consequently saved more energy, will be the champion).

7. Biodiversity and Nature on Campus

7.1 Why biodiversity on campus matters

Biodiversity is essential for maintaining healthy ecosystems, ensuring clean air and bolstering climate resilience. Urban green spaces are crucial in lessening heat islands, promoting mental well-being and providing serene environments for relaxation and learning. By actively protecting and enhancing natural areas on their campuses, universities can emerge as leaders in biodiversity efforts, setting a positive example for communities and fostering a deeper connection between students and the environment. This commitment enriches the educational experience and cultivates a culture of sustainability that can have far-reaching impacts.

7.2 Practical actions to promote biodiversity

Action	Why it matters	Practical tip
Plant native species	Support local ecosystems and pollinators.	Focus on drought-resistant, climate-adapted plants.
Reduce mowing	Protect insects and create microhabitats.	Establish "No-Mow Zones" on campus.
Install birdhouses and insect hotels	Provide shelter for beneficial species.	Students can build and decorate them.
Replace lawns with wildflower meadows	Increase biodiversity, lower maintenance.	Sow meadow seed mixes suited to local climates.
Ban pesticide use	Protect pollinators and soil health.	Use organic or biological pest controls instead.
Create green roofs and walls	Add green spaces to buildings.	Seek funding for pilot projects through green grants.

7.3 Real-world examples from universities

Example 1: UA Campus, an extensive urban garden

The University of Alicante campus covers one million square meters, of which over 200,000 are green areas. It is located in a semi-arid region and accomplishes an important social function for the society as it offers many green spaces. Aware of its value, in the last few years, it has taken significant steps to protect and promote biodiversity within the campus.

Some of the actions include:

- **UA Routes. (1) Maths Route** - to discover elements with a distinctly mathematical character that have inspired the design of various teaching and educational activities;
- **(2) Scenic/Landscape Path** - an itinerary traced to discover the botany on the UA Campus (with an informative guide & botanical tours in the website, in video format, to showcase biodiversity through the landscaping), valuing the rich biodiversity;
- **(3) Health, culture and science routes:** A series of routes have been designed throughout the campus to reveal iconic buildings and sites. They are accompanied by a detailed itinerary indicating the distance traveled, estimated time, etc. (Yellow, Green, Red and Blue Route).
- **Biodiversity corners**. UA has begun a progressive process of renovation, restoration and regeneration of its green spaces, implementing a new gardening model more in line with current trends, emphasising the presence of spontaneous plant species with low water demands and adapted to the climatic conditions of our environment. This includes [Illustrated Forest](#), [Healthy gardens](#), [Violet Garden](#), [Wild meadows](#), [Spontaneous vegetation](#), [Flowering tree pits](#), [Agricultural mulch](#), [Historical gardening](#), [Insect "hotels"](#)
- **Biodiversity resources.** Videos to promote campus botany, inventory of fauna and flora of the UA Campus, photographic guide to unique trees and shrubs at the UA, UverdA - dynamic green space management tool to catalogue plant species, eBird citizen science project - collecting data of different bird species in the campus.

   Entomological collection of the UA, CIBIO Biodiversity notebooks - a journal published by the Ibero-American Center for Biodiversity (CIBIO) of the University of Alicante since 1999.

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Example 2: USAAR fostering biodiversity

The campus is nestled within woodlands and benefits from green spaces and ponds. Student and staff participation has led to the planting of wildflower and insect-friendly meadows. Additionally, efforts to reduce car traffic include the de-paving of "French Square" to create a park, with further plans to develop a pedestrian-friendly campus environment.

Example 3: Biodiversity initiatives at UJM campuses

The University of Jean Monnet (UJM) has introduced several measures to support biodiversity across its campuses. Shared gardens and orchards have been established on multiple sites, adhering to a zero-pesticide policy. Four out of five campuses are registered as wildlife refuges with the LPO, and regular assessments of local fauna and flora are conducted to help preserve native species.

To encourage biodiversity, bird and bat nesting boxes, as well as insect hotels, have been installed to support these species. Two educational trails focusing on biodiversity have been created on the Papin and IUT-Saint-Étienne campuses, aiming to highlight the campus landscaping and natural environment.

Other practices include maintaining beehives, managing natural ponds, and controlling invasive species. The university also applies differentiated landscaping management, such as varying mowing heights, and maintains chicken coops and a small-scale eco-grazing project with sheep at the IUT campus.

Student-led projects contribute to sustainability efforts, including outdoor composting systems and annual biodiversity-related activities in partnership with the LPO, such as hedge planting and ecological surveys.

7.4 How to set up nature projects

Biodiversity audit (simple version)

- Walk around campus.
- List visible species (trees, birds, insects).
- Identify green deserts (lawns without flowers or trees).

Building birdhouses and bee hotels

- Use natural, untreated wood.
- Place birdhouses at least 2 meters above ground.
- Install bee hotels in sunny spots protected from rain.

Biodiversity Campus Tour

- Offer campus tours specialised in biodiversity.

7.5 Benefits for students and staff

- Healthier campus space with cleaner air and less dust improves both the environment and well-being of students and faculty.
- New volunteering and learning opportunities.
- Teaching opportunities for biology, ecology, design and more.

7.6 Using technology for campus nature

Practical Tools:

- **iNaturalist App:** Log and identify different species. By using the app you can increase your knowledge and contribute to science.
- **Seek by iNaturalist:** Use the power of image recognition technology to identify the plants and animals all around you. Earn badges for seeing different types of birds, amphibians, plants and fungi and participate in monthly observation challenges.
- **Pl@ntNet:** Identify local plant species with photos.
- **eBird**: share your bird sightings, explore birds and places of interest near you, create your own listings and save your photos and sounds. Completely free.

7.7 Eco-art and cultural projects

- Eco-art installations using natural materials (branches, stones, leaves).
- Photography contests ("Life on Campus").
- Story walks linking biodiversity facts with poems or student writing.

8. Green Procurement and Purchasing

8.1 Why green procurement matters

Universities invest millions of euros yearly in goods and services and adopting sustainable purchasing practices can significantly enhance their impact. By prioritising environmentally friendly products, universities can reduce carbon emissions and minimise harmful chemicals and waste associated with their operations. Additionally, sustainable purchasing supports ethical labor practices and fair trade, ensuring workers' rights are respected throughout the supply chain. This commitment to responsible sourcing drives positive change in the marketplace. It aligns with social responsibility and environmental stewardship values, inspiring students and communities to participate in more sustainable practices.

8.2 What is green procurement?

Green procurement means choosing products and services that:

- Minimise environmental harm throughout their life cycle.
- Promote social responsibility (fair wages, safe working conditions).
- Prioritise resource efficiency and ethical sourcing.
- Support local economies and circular systems.

8.3 Practical green purchasing principles

Principle	What it means	Practical tip
Buy less	Do you really need it?	Consolidate orders; reuse before replacing.
Choose durable	Longer life = less waste.	Prefer sturdy, repairable designs.

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Prioritise eco-certified products	Guarantees minimum environmental standards.	Look for EU Ecolabel, FSC, Fair Trade, Energy Star.
Source locally	Reduces transport emissions.	Prefer local suppliers when possible.
Consider lifecycle costs	Not just the cheapest upfront.	Include maintenance, energy use, recyclability.
Avoid greenwashing	Check for real certifications.	Don't trust vague "eco-friendly" claims without proof.
Repair	Extend product life.	Evaluate the benefits of repairing to extend life, also considering the energy label.
Lease or borrow	Extend product life.	Assess the possibility of leasing or borrowing instead of buying.
Request less packaging	Avoid waste.	Request unnecessary packaging on products to be removed.

8.4 What to look for: Key categories

Office supplies

- 100% recycled paper.
- Refillable pens and markers.
- Eco-labeled printer cartridges.

IT and electronics

- Energy Star certified laptops, monitors, printers.
- Modular designs that are easy to repair.
- Certified refurbished options when possible.

Furniture

- FSC-certified wood.
- Durable and modular designs.
- Second-hand options prioritised.

Cleaning supplies

- Biodegradable, non-toxic products with eco-labels.

Catering and food

- Local, seasonal, organic produce.
- Fair Trade certified coffee, tea, chocolate.

Construction and maintenance

- Follow national and EU legislation (e.g., the Slovenian Decree on GPP obligates public investors to build and/or refurbish buildings using wood in at least 30% of the volume of installed materials) that promotes a more sustainable construction or draw inspiration from other countries' legislation (e.g., https://pisrs.si/pregledPredpisa?id=URED7202).
- Rather than breaking new ground, first, explore if it is possible to expand the existing buildings with new floors and/or go underground. Such an expansion is also a great opportunity to refurbish the existing building stock for improved energy efficiency, enhanced structural integrity (e.g., anti-seismic resistance), and the installation of modern utilities (e.g., air ducts for centralised HVAC, ICT conduits, etc.).
- Sustainable building materials (natural materials from renewable sources (e.g., wood, hemp, flax, straw, thatch, etc.), recycled content, materials with low embodied energy, low VOC paints).
- High-tech materials when needed in thermal insulation and energy storage.
- Energy-efficient HVAC systems, lighting and appliances.
- Green energy generation (e.g., PV and/or PT panels, wind, geothermal, etc.), preferably onsite, but also off-site (public outreach possible here - energy communities, etc.).
- Water management (e.g., acquisition of rainwater on green roofs to be used for flushing, watering, etc., via a secondary water installation).

8.5 How to create a green purchasing policy

Sample Policy Outline:

Section	Details
Purpose	Promote environmental and social responsibility.
Scope	Applies to all university purchasing activities.
Principles	Life cycle thinking, eco-certification, local sourcing.
Implementation	Include green criteria in tenders and contracts.
Monitoring	Annual review of procurement practices and outcomes.

8.6 Real-world examples from universities

Example 1: USAAR cafeteria

The university's cafeteria is dedicated to sustainability through several initiatives:

- Sourcing food from organic farms, fair trade, and sustainable rearing practice.
- Prioritising short transportation distances for food procurement.
- Recycling waste fats into biofuel

Example 2: Food procurement at University of Alicante (UA)

Cafeterias required to use 70% regional and seasonal ingredients.

Example 3: Sustainable food procurement at UJM

All public procurement contracts related to food and catering services include sustainability clauses, with minimum requirements for organic products ranging from 20% to 50%, depending on the contract. More broadly, a sustainable procurement policy is currently being implemented, progressively incorporating environmental and social criteria into all institutional tenders and purchasing processes.

8.7 Fighting greenwashing

Warning signs:

- Vague labels ("eco-friendly," "green," "natural") with no certifications.
- Lack of information about sourcing or lifecycle.

How to check:

- Look for recognised certifications: EU Ecolabel, FSC, Energy Star, Fair Trade.
- Ask suppliers for environmental product declarations (EPDs).

8.8 Green procurement quick checklist

Before buying:

- Is it really necessary?
- Is it durable and repairable?
- Is it certified eco-friendly? (is it made from natural materials from renewable sources, or at least from materials with a low embedded energy?)
- Is it locally produced?
- Is there a reused or refurbished alternative?
- Will it create minimal waste at the end of the product life cycle?

9. Sustainable Food Practices

9.1 Why sustainable food matters

Food systems are responsible for up to 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with industrial farming playing a significant role in biodiversity loss and soil degradation. Embracing plant-based, local and seasonal diets represents one of the most impactful individual actions to combat climate change. By making sustainable food choices, we help protect the planet, promote public health and ensure future food security for generations to come.

9.2 Sustainable food principles for campuses

Principle	What it means	Practical tip
Plant-based first	Lower emissions compared to animal products.	Make vegetarian/vegan options the default.
Local and seasonal	Reduces transport emissions.	Source from nearby farms and markets.
Fair trade and organic	Supports ethical and eco-friendly production.	Prioritise Fair Trade coffee, tea, chocolate.
Minimal packaging	Reduces plastic waste.	Bulk food stations and reusable containers.
Food waste prevention	Respects natural resources.	Offer flexible portions; donate leftovers.
Inclusive menus	Cater to diverse diets.	Label vegan, vegetarian, halal, gluten-free options clearly.

9.3 Practical actions for students and staff

In cafeterias:

- Choose plant-based meals.
- Bring your own containers and utensils where allowed.
- Choose tap water over bottled beverages.

At events:

- Offer sustainable catering.
- Avoid individually packaged items.
- Use reusable tableware.

In dorms and offices:

- Start a food sharing shelf.
- Organise cooking workshops focusing on plant-based, zero-waste recipes.

9.4 Real-world examples from universities

Example 1: USAAR cafeteria and Fairtrade University

The university's cafeteria is dedicated to sustainability through several initiatives:

- Reusing excess food the next day or converting it into energy at biogas plants
- Introducing a climate-friendly dish
- Using reusable deposit cups
- Recovering heat from the rinsing line

In 2014, the University was the first Fairtrade University in Germany and has been recertified ever since. In all gastronomy establishments and shops on campus, fair trade products are offered, and there is a strong community engaging in the topic and organising events and campaigns to raise awareness.

Example 2: Supporting sustainable and inclusive food access at UJM

At UJM, several initiatives aim to promote both healthy eating habits and social inclusion. For students, microwaves are made available across campuses to encourage the preparation of home-cooked meals. For staff, affordable, locally sourced lunch boxes, prepared by a social integration company, are offered every Tuesday, featuring 100% homemade and seasonal dishes.

Each year, nutrition workshops are organised for students, guiding them on balanced diets. UJM also supports short supply chains and food accessibility through a range of measures: it acts as a relay for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) baskets (weekly fruit, vegetable, and egg boxes from local producers) and offers access to two *Agoraé* solidarity grocery stores and a student food bank, ensuring quality food is available to those facing financial hardship.

9.5 How to set up sustainable food projects

Food sharing points

- Install communal fridges or cupboards for unopened, still-edible food.
- Clear guidelines (e.g., only sealed or fresh items, no cooked leftovers).

Campus gardens and edible landscapes

- Create vegetable, herb, or fruit gardens maintained by students and staff.
- Use gardens for education, community building and food donations.

Zero-waste cooking workshops

- Teach practical skills for reducing kitchen waste.
- Focus on using "ugly" produce and leftovers creatively.

9.6 Sustainable catering guidelines

Green catering requirements:

- 50%+ vegetarian/vegan options.
- Local, seasonal ingredients are prioritised.
- Tap water offered freely (no bottled water).
- Minimal or reusable packaging.
- Clear allergen and sustainability labeling.
- Plan for donation or redistribution of leftovers.

9.7 Combating food waste on campus

Ideas:

- "Take What You Need" serving lines.
- Promote smaller plate options.
- Encourage staff and students to bring containers for leftovers.
- Partner with apps like **Too Good To Go** for redistributing unsold meals.

Tip: Post daily food waste stats at cafeteria entrances to raise awareness.

9.8 Quick templates for sustainable food events

Sustainable event catering checklist

Task	Status
50%+ plant-based dishes?	
Tap water available?	
Reusable dishware?	
Clear sustainability labels?	
Food waste plan in place?	

10. How to Get Involved: Student and Staff Actions

10.1 Why engagement matters

Sustainability initiatives succeed only when there is active participation from all community members. Students and staff play pivotal roles as catalysts for change, influencing daily operations, organising events and shaping campus culture toward more sustainable practices. By fostering leadership in sustainability, individuals develop essential skills such as collaboration, critical thinking and resilience - qualities that are increasingly valuable in today's job market. This collective effort enhances the campus environment and prepares everyone involved for a future where sustainability is key to addressing global challenges.

10.2 Real-world student-led projects

Example 1: Clothing swap station at EKA

The establishment of a campus clothing swap area serves as an effective initiative to reduce textile waste while promoting a culture of circular economy. This designated space encourages individuals to exchange clothing items, thereby extending the life of garments and minimising the environmental impact associated with fast fashion.

Example 2: Use of Recycled Paper in USAAR

At the USAAR, a student project was implemented where single-sided printed paper is collected, sorted, and bound into notepads. Click here: [la page verte](#).

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10.3 How to organise a sustainability project

Step-by-step:

1. **Identify a need**

   (e.g., waste issues, lack of bike parking, no plant-based meals)

2. **Form a team**

   Get friends, classmates, teachers and administrators on board.

3. **Set SMART goals**

   Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.

   - Example: "Cut cafeteria food waste by 30% in one year."

4. **Plan and promote**

   Use social media, posters, events and campus media.

5. **Launch and adjust**

   Start small. Learn. Improve.

6. **Celebrate and share success**

   Inspire others with your results!

10.6 Recognition and rewards

Universities could offer and find ways to recognise effort:

- Sustainability Certificates.
- Green Badges or Eco-Credits.
- Prizes for leading green projects.
- Extra points or credits for Service Learning courses linked to sustainability.

11. Resources, Checklists and Templates

11.1 Why a sustainability toolbox?

Knowledge is power; practical tools make action possible. We have given different examples throughout this handbook, but we have brought them together in this chapter for faster access and overview.

This section collects:

- Ready-to-use checklists
- Useful apps and websites
- Templates for greener projects
- Quick-access tools for daily sustainable choices

11.2 Checklists

Green event planning checklist

- Assigned a Green Coordinator.
- Eco-accessible venue selected.
- Digital programs (instead of printed flyers).
- Sustainable catering ordered.
- Reusable or compostable dishware.
- Waste sorting stations clearly labeled.
- Participant sustainability tips communicated.
- Impact measured and reported after the event.

Sustainable catering guidelines

- 50%+ plant-based dishes offered.
- Seasonal, local, organic foods prioritised.

- Tap water available-no bottled water.
- Minimal or reusable packaging.
- Allergen information and vegan/vegetarian labels clear.
- Establish a plan/protocol for food leftovers and promote safe food-sharing

Waste sorting template

Bin colour	What goes in
Blue	Paper and cardboard
Yellow	Plastics and metals
Green	Glass
Brown	Food and organic waste
Grey	Residual waste
Special bins	Batteries, electronics

(Adjust colours and materials according to local waste regulations.)

11.3 Helpful apps and tools

Ecosia - Search engine that plants trees.

Too Good To Go - App for buying leftover food from restaurants at low prices.

Olio - Share or find free surplus food in your area.

Komoot - Find cycling and hiking routes.

Pl@ntNet - Identify plants using your phone's camera.

Erasmus Goes Green CO$_2$ Calculator - Compare carbon footprints of different travel options.

Carbon Footprint & CO2 Tracker - CO2 tracker that helps you learn more about emissions from everyday mobility and dietary choices.

Earth Hero is an scientifically grounded app to empower all who want to reduce emissions.

11.4 Sustainability websites and resources

European Union Sustainable Development Goals

Transform4Europe Sustainability Resources

11.5 Templates for sustainability reporting

Sustainability project proposal template

Section	Details
Project Title	Name of initiative
Purpose	Problem addressed
Objectives	Clear, measurable goals
Target Group	Who benefits
Timeline	Project phases and deadlines
Resources Needed	Budget, materials, volunteers
Expected Impact	Environmental and/or social benefits
Measurement Plan	How success will be tracked

Simple event environmental impact report template

Area	Indicators	Notes
Participants	Number and transport mode	
Catering	% plant-based meals served	
Waste	Recycled vs. residual waste	
Materials	% reusable vs. disposable	
Energy Use	Lights/devices turned off post-event?	
Innovations	Unique green ideas used?	

11.6 Tips for using this toolbox

Start small - One checklist at a time.

Customise - Adapt templates to your needs and goals.

Share - Post checklists in dorms, offices, labs.

Celebrate - Highlight successful green actions on social media and campus newsletters.

Update annually - Sustainability tools should evolve with technology and habits.

12. Support networks and Closing Remarks

12.1 External support networks

Fairtrade Universities Germany: Aktuelles - fairtrade-universities.de - Fairtrade-Universities

Drinking water and avoiding plastic waste: Refill Deutschland | Plastikmüll vermeiden | Leitungswasser auffüllen

The German Cyclist Federation (ADFC): ADFC Saarland

Rede Campus Sustentável - Portugal

ORSIES - Observatório da Responsabilidade Social e Instituições de Ensino Superior

GCNP - Global Compact Network Portugal

12.2 Why your actions matter

Every action, no matter how small, contributes to building a greener and healthier campus community. Simple choices, like turning off lights when leaving a room, opting for plant-based meals at lunch, organising clothing swaps, or choosing a train instead of a flight, all play a significant role. Sustainability is not just one monumental effort; it consists of thousands of small, daily decisions made by individuals who care. You - students, staff and faculty - are the leaders who will shape a future that we can all be proud of. Your commitment to these small yet impactful actions will create a lasting legacy for generations to come.

12.3 Building a sustainable future together

Reflecting on the journey toward a sustainable future, it becomes clear that every habit, project and innovation contributes to building momentum for a more resilient and equitable world. Each small effort, when combined with the dedication of others, creates a powerful ripple effect. As Margaret Mead wisely stated, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." It serves as a reminder that our collective actions, no matter how small, hold the potential to inspire significant change and foster a better tomorrow. Let us continue to embrace these sustainable practices and remain committed to making a difference, knowing that we can transform our world together.