




# Roadmap Sustainability 2021-2026




Sustainable buildings



30% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction



Interdisciplinary research



25% renewable energy



100% sustainable procurement



Sustainability in education



Diversity & inclusion




Less flying and CO<sub>2</sub> compensation



Circular residual waste



14% less water use



Biodiversity



Sustainability communication network




Behaviour & participation




95% waste separation



Sustainable travel & transport



Fossil free logistics



60-95% plantbased and vegetarian



Motivated, vital & competent employees

## Introduction

Sustainability is one of the University of Groningen's key values. This means that the UG, as a socially responsible organization, has set the goal of integrating sustainable development into all aspects of the University. Sustainability is not only part of research and education but also of the University's operational management structure. The UG feels responsible for future generations and for a sustainable society. To achieve this, the University is working together with regional partners and actively contributes to increasing and sharing knowledge about sustainability at a regional, national and international level.

## Evaluation of the Roadmap 2015-2020

For the past five years, the Green Office (GO) has worked on the UG's sustainable goals and ambitions, based on the Sustainability Roadmap 2015-2020. The ambitions set out in the Roadmap have been the driving force behind its implementation and the sustainability policy within the UG. Although the UG is among the front runners when it comes to sustainability, sustainability is not yet part of the organization's 'DNA' and not all goals (and statutory obligations) from the Roadmap 2015-2020 have yet been achieved (on average, 60%). The increased awareness of sustainability has not yet led to a complete integration into the relevant UG-wide processes. Decisions are still too often taken without considering sustainability.

To achieve its own goals and the statutory goals in the long term and to remain among the front runners in the future, new sustainable ambitions must be a priority for the period 2021-2026.

## New Ambitions for the Roadmap 2021-2026

### ***Interlink all aspects of sustainability within the University's DNA.***

Based on new legislation that is related to sustainability, the Netherlands' Climate Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were drawn up in 2015 by the United Nations and the results that have or have not yet been obtained over the previous period, the Green Office, together with various partners within the UG (such as the University Services Department, the Property and Investment Projects department (VGI), the Sustainability Sounding Board, various academics and the HR department), has drawn up a new Sustainability Roadmap for the period 2021-2026. The reference year for the new ambitions is 2019 because the figures for 2020 are not representative. The new Roadmap is synchronized with the planning period of the UG's new Strategic Plan and will become part of that. The progress will be reported annually and is part of the UG's PDCA<sup>1</sup> cycle.

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<sup>1</sup> Plan Do Check Act Cycle.

The new sustainable ambitions have been combined into a single visual overview and each ambition will be explained briefly in this document. The ambitions have once more been formulated for Planet (the green side of sustainability), Performance (sustainability in teaching and research) and People (sustainable employability and development of staff) but are also linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The 17 SDGs that were formulated by the United Nations, together with the Sustainability Roadmap, will be leading for the UG's sustainable ambitions. Using the SDGs, the UG will focus on new insights and solutions for sustainable teaching, research and societal developments. The SDGs will not only start to play a greater role in the UG's teaching and research but will also be aspired to in the University's operational management structure. In doing so, the UG aims to become a dynamic and vital organization that is striving to reduce its footprint. The visualization of the new Roadmap shows how the SDGs are related to the UG's new sustainable ambitions.

### **Encourage sustainable behaviour**

By using the knowledge that is already present within the University (for example, regarding behavioural change and sustainability), awareness and active participation can be encouraged. Not only will students and staff learn more about sustainability within the UG (both in operational management and in teaching and research), they will also learn more about the way in which *they* can contribute to sustainability. This ensures that the sustainability programme will be more firmly embedded and that staff and students will become more involved, while it also contributes to the realization of the UG's sustainable goals in which behaviour plays a major role (such as mobility and waste separation).

### **Collaboration and communication**

Contributing to a sustainable society is one of the UG's key values. To make this known to as many people as possible, effective communication about sustainability is extremely important. To bring this about, the ambition is to establish an internal sustainability communication network so that faculties, Schools and service units are connected and the current collaborations can be intensified. Working together in communication about sustainability will consolidate the message and increase its reach. In addition to an internal sustainability communication network, connections are also sought with regional organizations, other universities and partners within the University of the North.

### **Online information**

Every year, the UG appears in various national and international rankings that are related to sustainability, such as the SustainaBul, the GreenMetric ranking and the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Ranking. Experience has shown that online information plays a key role in making the UG's efforts regarding sustainability known. Complete and up-to-date online information can facilitate a maximum score for rankings and, in this way, contribute to the UG's international front runner position regarding sustainability.

## Current developments

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, working and studying is currently organized differently from before. It cannot yet be predicted what the long-term impact of this will be and how this exactly translates to the new sustainability ambitions and goals. A University with hybrid forms of working (such as part-time online teaching and remote working) may lead to:

- energy saving due to more efficient use of spaces;
- a reduced number of commuter transport kilometres;
- a reduced number of flights;
- and, consequently, a reduction in the University's CO<sub>2</sub> footprint.

## Ambitions per theme

The following ambitions have been drawn up for the key themes **Planet**, **Performance** and **People** and for Communication. Policies have already been drawn up and a budget has been made available for some of the ambitions. Following approval, the remaining ambitions will be worked on further, in collaboration with the relevant departments or by the Green Office itself.

The ambitions from the Roadmap 2021-2026 are linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and represent many of the different goals that were formulated by the UN. These can be found in the **Visualization** of the Roadmap.



## PLANET **UG towards a CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral University by 2035**

In accordance with the Netherlands' Climate Agreement that was published in May 2019 and the Dutch universities' roadmap that was commissioned by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), the UG will adhere to the goals from the climate agreement for 2030 and 2050, with the ultimate goal of reducing the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to zero. In 2016, the UG signed the Groningen Energy Neutral 2035 roadmap, in which it was agreed that the UG will comply with the Municipality of Groningen's goals of being CO<sub>2</sub> neutral by 2035. This means that the UG must be CO<sub>2</sub> neutral by 2035, irrespective of the VSNU agreements.

From 2021, there will be stricter regulations for newly constructed buildings regarding energy use, with the aim of constructing buildings that are almost energy neutral. In 2050, there must be an energy saving of 27% compared to 2005, while the remaining energy must be generated in accordance with the climate agreement. In doing so, the new ambitions that are listed in Table 1 will be leading in the UG's new strategic accommodation plan.

A distinction is made between ambitions that are in accordance with the statutory requirements, as stated in the Environmental Protection Act, and the sustainability ambitions that are UG-specific.

### Ambitions in accordance with the statutory requirements (compliant with the Environmental Protection Act)

#### CO<sub>2</sub>

→ 30% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction by 2025 compared to 2019

#### Energy

- In accordance with statutory requirements, 2% energy saving per year
- All offices (buildings) to energy label C by 2023 and to label A by 2030
- Newly constructed buildings and alterations in accordance with BENG (almost energy-neutral buildings)

### UG ambitions (determined based on feasibility)

#### CO<sub>2</sub>

→ CO<sub>2</sub> neutral by 2035

- In 2026, 25% of energy from own renewable sources:
  - ◆ 2.5% from solar panels

- ◆ 22.5% ATEs (Aquifer thermal energy storage), realized and new
- Implement VSNU Roadmap:
  - ◆ gas-free Zernike by 2026
  - ◆ aim for BREEAM standard 'excellent'

### **Waste**

- By the end of 2026, 95% of the total waste (hazardous and non-hazardous) will be separated
- 15% reduction of the total waste in 2026 compared to 2019 (from 29 kg to 25 kg per staff member/student)
- All residual waste circular by 2026

### **Biodiversity**

- Realize an ecologically valuable (target species policy) campus and UG city centre locations by 2026

### **Water**

- Reduction in the amount of water per user (staff member or student) of 5% in the short term (compared to 2019) and in total 10% in the long term (by 2026)

### **Transport mobility**

- Encourage staff to make smart and Mobility sustainable choices regarding commuter transport
- From 16% CO<sub>2</sub> emissions resulting from air travel in 2019 to 10% in 2026 (30% reduction)
- 100% CO<sub>2</sub> compensation for all air travel by 2026
- Aim for fossil-free logistics by 2023, ahead of the Municipality of Groningen's policy: emission-free logistics by 2025 – extend this proposed municipal policy from the city centre to all UG locations

### **Food**

- 95% of the meat has the Better Life label ☆☆☆
- 60-95% of the food offered in canteens and by catering is vegetarian or plant-based (depending on the location)
- Establish an interdisciplinary Food Living Lab to study and facilitate the transitions to sustainable food systems – including plant-based food

### **Hydrogen**

- Explore the possibilities for the application of hydrogen at Zernike campus



## **PERFORMANCE** More involvement in sustainability from students, staff and external parties

The new goals for teaching and research will be formulated in consultation with the new Schools and with that of Sustainable Society in particular. New ambitions have been formulated to encourage bottom-up green initiatives to involve students and staff in making the UG more sustainable: (1) ambassadors who organize activities to make their own faculty more sustainable, (2) green committees; small interdisciplinary groups comprising staff who wish to help solve the specific environmental problems at the UG (e.g. plastic waste in laboratories), (3) study associations that can apply for grants and obtain sustainable labels and (4) GO Living Lab projects whereby students collaborate with GO for curricular projects that are related to sustainability. Work is in progress on the goals that are listed in the table below.

### **Teaching**

- Expand the number of sustainable study options (course units, living labs).
- Train the trainers, establish a sustainable teaching course for lecturers.
- The Sustainability Sounding Board's teaching and research group will start talks with faculties to explore how sustainability can be incorporated more into the curriculum without deviating from the content of the teaching programme.
- Within the new Schools, specific attention will be paid to sustainable teaching, including in the form of interdisciplinary Minors that are yet to be developed and that will be accessible to all UG students.

### **Research**

- Encourage interdisciplinary research on sustainability.

### **Bottom-up involvement**

- By 2026, over 100% increase in active participation in 'green initiatives' by students and staff:
  - ◆ 250 active ambassadors and at least four interdisciplinary green committees
  - ◆ 60 student organizations involved in subsidies or label programmes
  - ◆ 10 Living Lab projects from various faculties every year

### **Purchasing**

- From 2021, realize 100% sustainable purchasing for 80% of the new European tenders.
- From 2021, ask about suppliers' sustainable operational management:

- ◆ Appropriate working conditions, by investigating this for 100% of the new tenders and achieving a higher % every year.
- ◆ SROI (Social Return on Investment), by investigating this for 100% of the new tenders and achieving a higher % every year.
- ◆ Regional purchasing, by requesting a tender from one regional supplier, one preferred supplier and one other supplier for multiple private tenders and achieving a higher % every year.



## **PEOPLE** Sustainable HR policy for a dynamic and vital organization

The University's HR department will be responsible for the sustainable HR policy and its implementation. The key themes are Sustainable Employability and Diversity & Inclusion. The main focus areas of these are listed below.

- Staff who are skilled, motivated and fit (physically and mentally).
- A culture focused on development among staff and managers.
- Encouraging diversity and inclusion within the organization.





## COMMUNICATION

Contributing to a sustainable society is one of the UG's key values. The communication ambitions and goals are overarching for Planet, Performance and People and are aimed at effective sustainability communication, collaboration between departments and improved online visibility (partly with a view to international rankings). Working together in communication about sustainability will consolidate the message and increase its reach.

The communication ambitions that support the Roadmap Sustainability 2021-2026 and the sustainability policy are listed below.

- Establish an internal sustainability communication network to improve each other's communication about sustainability and be informed about developments in departments and faculties.
- Improve and update online information.
- Plan communication campaigns based on scientific insights (sustainability and behaviour) and evaluate them.
- Encourage sustainable behaviour among staff and students and, in doing so, contribute to sustainable ambitions in which behaviour plays a major role (e.g. waste separation and mobility).
- Embed the Integrated Sustainability Programme internally within the University by paying more attention to it in communication.

### The role of communication in awareness and participation

The main themes for communication about sustainability are awareness and participation. By using the knowledge that is already present within the University (e.g. in the field of behavioural change and sustainability), communication about sustainability generates more impact and awareness and participation can be encouraged. Not only will students and staff learn more about sustainability within the UG (both in operational management and in teaching and research), they will also learn more about the way in which *they* can contribute to sustainability. This ensures that the sustainability programme will be more firmly embedded in the University and that staff and students will become more involved. Creating awareness and encouraging participation also contribute to the realization of the UG's sustainable goals in which behaviour plays a major role.