

University of Würzburg 2025 Sustainability Report

Report on the status of the implementation of the sustainability strategy¹



Summary

The overall institutional sustainability strategy of the University of Würzburg, on which this sustainability report is based, comprises six fields of action with a total of 32 goals. For each of these goals, we have defined several measures to reach them and indicators to track our progress towards them.

These measures and indicators, as well as the goals themselves, have been carefully selected in an extensive participatory process and underwent several rounds of internal consultation within the university before the sustainability strategy was adopted.

Overall, the University of Würzburg is on a promising path regarding its efforts in the area of sustainability: 27 out of 32 goals are either in the best one of three categories ('good') (13 goals) or are being implemented and pursued ambitiously (14 goals).

Milestones and showcase projects include the research-oriented WueLAB sustainability lab, the strategy for the further development of education for sustainable development at the University of Würzburg, which has received an award from UNESCO, the further strengthening of student initiatives and the constructive cooperation with the city and society.

With the help of its overall institutional sustainability strategy, the University of Würzburg has picked up speed on its path to becoming a sustainable university. It will continue to pursue the 27 goals mentioned above with ambition and will also work vigorously to implement the remaining goals in category three as well.

The visible successes achieved recently in all fields of action allow us to be confident about the progress we are making towards becoming a sustainable university. The strong will and great commitment of many members of the university to sustainable development, the constructive collaboration across disciplines, status groups and boundaries of the university as well as the showcase projects already completed and the examples of best practices already developed provide momentum that the University of Würzburg will also use for the continuing implementation of its sustainability goals.

¹ Resolved by the University Management on 16 December 2025.

Introductory remarks

To the University of Würzburg, being sustainable means reaching the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).² Understood in this way, sustainable development covers both local and global aspects of ecological, economic and social sustainability.

This overall institutional sustainability strategy structures the comprehensive goals that the University of Würzburg has set itself in the area of sustainability and makes them more tangible and binding. The strategy is designed to help us accomplish the major task of becoming a sustainable university and, with the help of the following report, make both challenges and successes visible.

All members of the university are called upon to act in their respective field of activity in such a way that the University of Würzburg collectively develops into a sustainable university, i.e. a university that acts in the spirit of sustainable development.



Whole Institution Approach

To fulfil its aspirations in the area of sustainability, the university supports a common understanding and joint action in the spirit of a whole-institution approach, a holistic approach that focuses on sustainability as described above in all fields of action of the university as an institution and establishes it as a guiding principle for its actions. This approach will allow us to identify potentially conflicting goals in the best way possible and provides a foundation for fulfilling our sustainability-related aspirations in all fields of action.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainable_Development_Goals or <https://17ziele.de/>.

‘Sustainability’: defining the term more precisely and putting it in context

The University of Würzburg is committed to the principle of sustainable development in the sense of ecologically compatible, socially balanced and economically productive development. The planetary boundaries, along with the orientation toward a life of dignity for all, provide the external framework for such development.³ On the basis of the Bavarian higher education innovation act (*Bayerisches Hochschulinnovationsgesetz*)⁴, the university is committed to preserving natural resources and biodiversity, to climate change mitigation and to education for sustainable development⁵. In addition, it adheres to ethical principles when it fulfils its responsibilities. All of this has been laid down in the Bavarian higher education agreement⁶ and the university objectives agreement⁷.



Culture of *sustainability*

We understand a ***culture of sustainability*** as a new practice in everyday university operations that is accompanied by cross-organisational change in processes and framework conditions. To achieve this, we aim to raise awareness of sustainability-related issues across the board. A culture of sustainability affects all our fields of action in the higher education system as well as the associated processes, routines, regulatory systems and underlying values.⁸

We want to encourage all members of the university to help create a sustainable society and promote sustainable development.

³ Cf. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/992814/1875184/f2fbc22ecdb457339bd90f9b06e4b0d/deutsche-nachhaltigkeitsstrategie-2021-kurzfassung-bf-download-bpa-data.pdf>.

⁴ Art. 2 (7) Sentence 1, https://www.stmwk.bayern.de/download/21907_BayHIG.pdf.

⁵ https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/bildung/bildung-fuer-nachhaltige-entwicklung/bildung-fuer-nachhaltige-entwicklung_node.html.

⁶ Section 9, https://www.stmwk.bayern.de/download/22215_Rahmenvereinbarung-2023-2027_ohne-Unterschrift.pdf.

⁷ Section 9, https://www.stmwk.bayern.de/download/22332_Uni-Würzburg.pdf.

⁸ Cf. <https://www.duz.de/beitrag/!id/1618/vom-ziel-zur-normalitaet>.

The overall institutional sustainability strategy of the University of Würzburg sets out specific goals in six fields of action: research, teaching and learning, governance, campus operations, student initiatives and exchange with society and knowledge transfer. Based on the science-based model of planetary boundaries and the wedding cake model⁹, we are planning to give priority to intensifying measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation and the promotion of biodiversity. Concrete measures and indicators have been introduced for all goals, and a set of quantitative data has been compiled on which sustainability monitoring at the University of Würzburg will be based.

The efforts in the area of sustainable development that we are making at the University of Würzburg are closely intertwined with our efforts in other areas, such as gender equality, diversity or internationalisation. Digitalisation is also a key consideration and is incorporated into the university's efforts in the area of sustainable development.

Networking and collaboration, e.g. with the BayZeN Bavarian centre for higher education and sustainability (*Zentrum für Hochschule und Nachhaltigkeit Bayern*) or within the CHARM-EU European university alliance, are also essential for the implementation of sustainability measures at the University of Würzburg.



⁹ Cf. <https://www.bmu.de/themen/nachhaltigkeit/integriertes-umweltprogramm-2030/planetare-belastbarkeitsgrenzen> and <https://www.uni-hamburg.de/en/nachhaltigkeit/verstaendnis/sdgs.html>. The wedding cake model ranks the Sustainable Development Goals in a kind of hierarchy or order of priority, as some of the goals represent non-negotiable planetary boundaries. Compliance with planetary boundaries and the preservation of the biosphere are considered fundamental. The related goals form the foundation of the cake and thus necessitate other goals. The implementation of those SDGs that are aimed at complying with planetary boundaries is given priority.

Background for the following report

Following a few theoretical considerations, the following section will give details on the status of the implementation of our sustainability strategy in the six fields of action: research, teaching and learning, governance, campus operations, student initiatives as well as exchange with society and transfer. The report is based on the [table of goals, measures and indicators](#), which has been adopted as part of our [sustainability strategy](#).

This report provides a summary of the implementation of the **goals** and **measures** defined in the strategy adopted in 2024 and an evaluation of the status of the progress made towards reaching these goals from an overarching perspective.

As a supplement to this sustainability report, a separate table, which is based on the sustainability strategy table, describes the status of the implementation of each of the 193 indicators defined in the strategy. This table can be found on the [University's webpage](#).

Three categories have been introduced to evaluate the progress we have made towards reaching our 32 goals: 'good', 'being implemented' and 'being developed'. The first and best category ('good') covers a spectrum and, depending on the goal in question, can mean that the goal has been reached as desired or to a fully satisfactory degree, but at least that it has been reached as planned or as agreed for the 2024 sustainability strategy with the measures specified therein. The information and implementation status of the measures and indicators found in the table therefore factor into the evaluation.

To contextualise and understand, in the best way possible, the evaluation provided below of the progress we have made towards reaching our goals, we therefore recommend referring to the table accompanying this report and reviewing the details on the measures and indicators found there.

The report mainly covers the year 2024, but some current developments from 2025 have been added.



Nachhaltigkeitsaktivitäten an der Universität Würzburg

- Details on additional efforts that the University of Würzburg is making in the area of sustainability as well as on activities in this area that have been going on for longer already can be found on the university's [web page on sustainability](#).
- In addition, our [sustainability map](#) lists projects specifically related to sustainability in teaching and research at the University of Würzburg.
- This [overview page](#) provides an overview of facts and figures as well as the structure of the University of Würzburg.

Field of action: research

In the 'research' field of action, the University of Würzburg addresses both research into sustainability-related issues (sustainability research) and the sustainable conduct of research (sustainability in the research process), e.g. when conducting research in the laboratory or organising conferences. Conflicting goals in the context of the tension between these two areas are also addressed at the University of Würzburg.

The WueLAB sustainability lab¹⁰ was founded in 2022 as a central academic institution at the University of Würzburg and has since been intensively engaged in research into the requirements associated with establishing a culture of sustainability at the university. This research includes projects in the natural sciences and technology as well as perspectives from the social sciences and humanities.



Sustainability research

The aim of **sustainability research** is to scientifically investigate real-world problems in the area of sustainability in order to, for example, understand and shape change processes and the principles underlying them. In this way, sustainability research helps develop solutions at the local, regional and global levels. Sustainability research is an interdisciplinary and cross-cutting topic that requires the collaboration of all academic disciplines. The University of Würzburg strongly promotes interdisciplinary research already and, in addition, wants to further strengthen transdisciplinary research.

Such research is based on intensive academic exchange with partners in the field and is characterised by critical reflection on one's own (academic and professional) position. Seeing and understanding research in this way in relation to other fields of social action allows us to make a contribution to sustainable development both locally and globally.

¹⁰ Cf. <https://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/en/wuelab/>.

Goal R.1:**Strengthen research on sustainability-related issues/with applications in the field of sustainability and promote it structurally and financially**

As planned, interdisciplinary research projects on sustainability-related issues were increasingly initiated and coordinated by WueLAB in 2024. In addition, transformation experiments were (and are being) funded with funds from the university objectives agreement. Subject-specific research on sustainability-related issues is being carried out at all of the ten faculties of the university. To present these research projects, the University of Würzburg created a [sustainability map](#) in 2024, which can be found on the university website and where all members of the university can enter their relevant projects.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal R.2:**Promote and fund transformative research (research aimed at creating social change in the sense of socio-ecological transformation)**

Projects in the area of transformative research are principally funded and connected with each other by the sustainability lab, which also generates more visibility for transformative research. This ranges from social science or legal sustainability research to biodiversity and materials research. The collaborative [REKLINEU](#) project, which is being funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR), investigates, for example, possibilities for promoting and expanding carbon sinks on university properties; the findings are scheduled to be published in 2026 as planned.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal R.3:**Incorporate practical know-how from society into research, teaching and campus operations**

A transfer of knowledge from society to the University of Würzburg takes place at all faculties and in the central administration. Since 2022, this has been particularly evident in transformation experiments conducted at the WueLAB sustainability lab.

To encourage and fund transdisciplinary research, the university should introduce a new award in this area. The details of the award for transformative research are still being discussed.

At the interface of society and the university, with a view towards society, the *Universitätsbund* society of the friends and patrons of the university and the Wittenstein Foundation established the Würzburg Research and Transfer Award (*Würzburger Förderpreis Forschung und Transfer*). The award comes with a cash prize of €50,000 (2024) or €100,000 (2025) and is aimed at interdisciplinary research projects with a potential for social applicability.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented



Transdisciplinarity

In the context of research, transdisciplinarity generally means that, in addition to the various academic disciplines, the expertise of practitioners – for example from local authorities/cities, NGOs, businesses or members of the public – is also incorporated into a research design.

They contribute their knowledge and experience to the entire research process. This results in both interdisciplinary and participatory research: Partners in the field are no longer just ‘respondents’ but act as equals in the research setting.¹¹

¹¹ For more information, see: <https://www.rifs-potsdam.de/en/news/transdisciplinary-research-what-does-mean>.



Sustainability in the research process

Sustainability in the research process is another focus in the field of research. The University of Würzburg will increasingly align its research activities with its social, ecological and economic sustainability goals. This includes, among other things, the responsible use of material, financial and human resources. In particular, the university will encourage a debate about the ecological footprint of its research, which has also been promoted by the German Research Foundation (DFG)¹²

The following goals relate to sustainability in the research process.

Goal R.4:

Address conflicting goals in the context of the tension between research and sustainability in the research process

Conflicting goals are being addressed by the Sustainability Officers at the faculties. Interdisciplinary as well as cross-faculty and cross-institutional exchange also takes place at joint meetings.

Events and the research (approaches) of WueLAB also promote discussion of conflicting goals.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal R.5:

Make research processes more sustainable

Efforts are being made to organise events in a resource- and climate-friendly manner; a step towards reaching this goal has been the issuing of guidelines. We want to encourage sustainability in all research groups and laboratories: To this end, we make successes visible, e.g. through the My Green Lab certification. A circular letter was sent out to raise awareness of the need to reduce travel-related fossil fuel consumption. In addition, the Bavarian state agency for energy and climate protection (*Landesagentur für Energie und Klimaschutz*) purchases certificates to offset the emissions of air travel. The issue of sustainability in the research process is addressed in proposals for DFG funding; the University of Würzburg provides advising on this matter to its members.

Implementation status of this goal: being developed

¹² Cf. <https://www.dfg.de/en/service/press/press-releases/2023/press-release-no-28..>



Prerequisite for academic research

An important prerequisite for academic research, e.g. into climate change mitigation or adaptation, to be accepted by and beneficial to society is trust in the findings of free research and in the integrity of researchers. This is why the University of Würzburg is committed to good practice in research, open research, the professional management of research data and transparent, target group-oriented science communication and has set itself the following goal in this regard:

Goal R.6:

Promote a good research culture and the acceptance of research by society

This goal is being addressed and implemented through measures relating to open research, research data management, good practice in research and academic freedom. For example, the university has already adopted a [code of academic freedom and responsibility](#).

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented



Example of best practices in the field of research: transformative research at WueLAB

Active participation by staff members and students is essential for a sustainable university. This is why WueLAB conducts what are called transformation experiments. These are cross-status group interdisciplinary projects with experimental elements or practical components that are aimed at promoting the socio-ecological transformation of society, biodiversity or climate change mitigation, i.e. can be classified as transformative research. Any member of the University of Würzburg can request that such a transformation experiment be conducted or can join existing projects and initiatives and, in this way, participate in the processes of sustainable development.

12 transformation experiments were conducted at WueLAB in the reporting period in 2024, two of which were projects by students.



WueLAB-Team



Fig. 2:
 WueLAB-Team, see [team website](#). (photo: Levi Rhomberg)

Field of action: teaching and learning

As a place where researchers, future teachers and leaders as well as decision-makers in business and society are trained, the University of Würzburg has a special responsibility. This is why the university makes a wide range of efforts to equip its students with the necessary (specialist) knowledge, the necessary creative skills and the foundations for ways of thinking and acting that are essential for understanding the complex topic of sustainable development in all its many facets.

To this end, the University of Würzburg is embedding the cross-cutting task of (higher) education for sustainable development in its structures and is working to introduce various teaching formats at its faculties and to qualify (teaching-degree) students in the area of education for sustainable development (ESD). In addition, special emphasis is placed on equipping teachers with knowledge and skills in the area of higher education for sustainable development (HESD).

Goal T.1:

Embed sustainability in teaching and learning structures

The University of Würzburg aims to embed education for sustainable development (ESD) as a cross-cutting task more broadly and deeply in the area of teaching and learning. Its strategy for doing so received the 2025 [National ESD Award](#) (*Nationaler Preis – Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung*). As part of the strategy, details on the implementation of ESD in courses and degree programmes are specified in target agreements between the University Board and all faculties. Degree programmes and modules with a focus on sustainability are being developed (further) and are already being offered. To enhance the knowledge and skills of its teachers in the area of ESD, the university introduced the Higher Education for Sustainable Development certificate (*Themenzertifikat Hochschulbildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung*). The university continued its efforts to connect existing activities in the area of ESD across faculty borders and sought and engaged in exchange with other higher education institutions about ESD.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal T.2:

Cross-faculty discourse on sustainability-related issues

To reach this goal, the university is offering interdisciplinary courses on sustainability and is developing opportunities to earn additional qualifications in the area of sustainability, some of which have already been established. In this context, the digital courses on interdisciplinary sustainability studies which are currently being developed at WueLAB can be highlighted. The opportunities for students to earn additional qualifications that have already been established include the Global Systems and Intercultural Competence (GSiK) certificate, the *Bildung, Ökologie und Nachhaltigkeit* (BOeN) certificate for education, ecology and sustainability and the Career Centre's Professional Skills Profile certificate.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal T.3:**Subject-specific implementation of teaching on sustainability-related topics**

This goal includes promoting education for sustainable development in all degree programmes if possible. A list of all courses on sustainability-related topics has been compiled and introduced on the university's WueStudy platform. A catalogue of criteria for measuring the number of courses on sustainability-related topics or sustainability-related creative skills has also been developed and is currently being revised.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal T.4:**Create better conditions for students to promote social sustainability**

Student parents receive support from the [Campus StudiKids](#) childcare facility. Student diversity is understood as a facet of social sustainability and is strongly promoted by the University of Würzburg. Accordingly, the university resolutely opposes discrimination. An [anti-discrimination contact point](#) has been set up to deal with any cases of discrimination that may occur, and we have become more professional in the way we handle such cases. In addition, the university promotes the integration of international students, e.g. through events such as the International Evening.

In addition, teachers at the University of Würzburg get trained on how to interact with students with mental health issues. The university provides support to students with disabilities or chronic health conditions and identifies suitable support options for students from different socio-cultural or socio-economic backgrounds.

Implementation status of this goal: good



Example of best practices in the field of teaching and learning: HBNE subject certificate

The University of Würzburg has been offering the Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) certificate since March 2024. The certificate is aimed at lecturers who want to design their courses with issues relating to social, economic and ecological sustainability in mind. Initiated by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and the WueLAB sustainability lab, the programme is in line with the requirements of the Bavarian higher education innovation act (*Bayerisches Hochschulinnovationsgesetz*).

The programme, which combines online and in-person courses, provides participants with practical and theoretical insights into education for sustainable development. They receive support in trying out new teaching methods from the HESD context and systematically documenting their experiences in an e-portfolio. This portfolio not only serves the purpose of reflecting on their own learning process but can also be used as evidence of their commitment to sustainable education in their academic careers.

The certificate comprises four modules that are specifically designed to equip participants with the necessary tools and knowledge to integrate sustainability into their teaching activities in a beneficial manner.



Fig. 3:
HBNE subjects certificate at the ZBL in cooperation with Teaching4Sustainability. Poster design: Luise Stark

Field of action: governance

To establish a culture of sustainability, the University of Würzburg is embedding the issue of sustainable development more firmly in its organisational structures.

The University of Würzburg understands sustainable development as a strategic task for both internal processes (such as communication and participation) and structures (such as committees, the University Board etc.). Sustainable development is considered a (creative) task for all members of the University of Würzburg. Responsibility for this lies primarily with managers.

Good and responsible management of the university and a sustainable HR policy are promoted, for example, by Professional Development and Conflict Management Services; the university is aiming to further establish these instruments at the institutional level.

The University of Würzburg communicates across the whole university on the topic of sustainability and works to raise awareness of sustainability-related issues.

People make increased efforts towards sustainable development in particular if the necessary mental, social and material resources are available. This is why we are fostering a university culture, organisational and professional development as well as leadership in the sense of corporate social responsibility and are continuing our efforts in the areas of gender equality, diversity, anti-discrimination, inclusion and the health of our employees and students.

Goal G.1:

Embed sustainability in the structures of the entire university in a binding manner in a whole-institution approach

We have embedded responsibilities in the area of sustainability in the structures of academic self-governance at the University of Würzburg: Since 2021, sustainability has explicitly been part of the portfolio of a member of the University Board; the Sustainability Committee was established in 2013 and meets once each semester; in 2024, the position of Sustainability Officer was created at the faculties and central (academic) institution of the university. The university's sustainable development goals are defined in its overall institutional sustainability strategy, they are being monitored and their implementation evaluated and described in this report and in the accompanying table. In addition, the WueLAB sustainability lab was established in 2022 as a central academic institution and platform for sustainability-related issues.

We are also planning to further embed responsibilities in the area of operational sustainability in our structures; to this end, an Energy Management Service was set up in 2023, which is part of the central administration. We explored possibilities for creating a low-threshold digital contact point for issues relating to operational sustainability but had to postpone these plans indefinitely due to resource constraints. However, people can still contact the [contact point for operational sustainability issues](#) at the [Office of Occupational Health and Safety, Animal Welfare and Environmental Protection](#).

Sustainability is already a topic that is frequently discussed during the annual performance review meetings held in the central administration. The topic of sustainability will be included in the guidelines for these meetings when they are being revised in 2026.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal G.2:**Good and responsible management of the university**

The university is committed to further developing good leadership as a key issue within the organisation and to further establishing a culture of good leadership. To this end, a comprehensive [professional development strategy](#) has been developed. Conflict management, which was institutionalised in 2015, is also worth highlighting. Leadership guidelines for the central administration have been in place since 2018.

The University of Würzburg is making efforts to contain cases of abuse of power as well as sexual harassment and violence: A contact point for cases of sexual harassment and violence was created in 2024. Relevant guidelines and codes of conduct are currently being developed. A health management system was established in 2018 through the [Gesunde Hochschule](#) workplace health project and is being developed further: From 2026 onwards, the programme will also cover students.

Efforts are also being made to help staff members and students that have family commitments or consider starting a family reconcile work/study and family commitments: The university has set up a Family Service Centre that offers a wide range of support services and has been regularly undergoing the family-friendly university audit (*Audit Familiengerechte Hochschule*) since 2008.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal G.3:**Ensure gender equality, equal opportunity and inclusion**

The University of Würzburg has been taking measures to promote diversity for some time now, cf. its [diversity policy](#) and the [Vielfalt gestalten](#) diversity certificate of the *Stifterverband der deutschen Wissenschaft* association. An [anti-discrimination contact point](#) was created at the Coordinating Office for Diversity in 2024.

Measures to promote gender equality have been and continue to be taken, which have been laid down in equal opportunity policies for the university's academic staff and students as well as for its non-academic support staff.

In addition, the University of Würzburg fosters inclusion and accessibility. The KIS Student Disability Resource Centre plays a key role here.

Implementation status of this goal: good

**Goal G.4:
Strengthen a sustainable HR policy**

Another goal in the field of governance is for the University of Würzburg to pursue a sustainable HR policy. To further strengthen such a policy, we want to help managers become more professional in the way they recruit highly qualified staff. Training courses on this topic are currently being developed. In addition, the Professional Development Steering Committee, which has been established at the University of Würzburg, is currently developing a guide to recruitment.

Efforts are also being made to ensure the stability and consistency of the work of the university's institutions, to promote the transfer of knowledge and to increase the attractiveness of the university as an employer. In preparation for a quantitative assessment with comparative figures, we are looking at fixed-term employment relationships.

Implementation status of this goal: being developed

**Goal G.5:
Raise awareness among the members of the university of the importance of sustainable development**

In addition to the awareness-raising measures that are already being taken in the context of other fields of action, such as research, teaching and learning or campus operations, communication on the issue of sustainability is also being strengthened and promoted at a higher level across the university. A central web page on sustainability at the University of Würzburg¹³ provides an overview and information about the wide range of measures we are taking and current topics in this area.

The University of Würzburg recognises sustainable action, or action in the spirit of sustainable development, and honours it with its annual *Albrecht Fürst zu Castell-Castell-Preis* sustainability award.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

**Goal G.6:
Strengthen academic self-governance**

At the University of Würzburg, decisions taken by the Senate and the Extended University Board are transparent; they are published internally via excerpts from the relevant meetings. The university highlights the importance of university elections and committees by presenting role models in this area in a manner that attracts the attention of the media.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

¹³ Cf. <https://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/en/university/sustainability/>.



Example of best practices in the field of governance: Sustainability Officers

In addition to setting up a Sustainability Committee at management level (2013) and making sustainability part of the portfolio of a member of the University Board (2021), Sustainability Officers were appointed in 2024 at the faculties and at almost all central (academic) institutions.

These officers help to establish sustainability as an integral part of all of the university's institutions and to embed our sustainability strategy in the structures of the university and to implement it.

The network of Sustainability Officers helps to ensure successful communication, participation in decision making in terms of content, the mutual provision of information and the identification of relevant sustainability-related issues. In addition, the Sustainability Officers can contribute their creativity and innovative strength to further enhance sustainable development at their faculties/institutions.

They serve as contact points for staff and students at their respective faculties/institutions for all matters relating to sustainability and involve both staff and students in their work in an appropriate manner. They collect enquiries and forward them to the appropriate central university departments, e.g. WueLAB, Service Centre Technical Operations, Energy Management Service etc.

The Sustainability Officers meet at least once a year. The Vice-President for Sustainability summons these meetings.

Field of action: campus operations

At the end of 2025, the University of Würzburg will for the first time calculate its carbon footprint, using the BayCalc tool¹⁴, which is based on the Greenhouse Gas Protocol¹⁵, and, in addition, will present a reduction pathway for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that will be based thereon. It also focuses on carbon sinks on university properties. The university aims to reduce its energy consumption in relation to net floor space and increase energy efficiency. It will install a ground-mounted photovoltaic system (construction to begin in 2026) to increase the share of self-generated electricity from renewable sources. In addition, the university is taking measures to enhance biodiversity on its campus grounds.

The university promotes the sustainable use of resources (paper, chemicals, digital devices etc.) and sustainability-oriented purchasing.

On the basis of research findings, the University of Würzburg wants to promote climate-friendly transportation and establish it as a model. In addition, the university aims to ensure that scheduled construction projects on campus are designed with social sustainability, climate change adaptation, the promotion of biodiversity as well as nature conservation and animal welfare in mind.

Goal O.1:

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become climate neutral

The University of Würzburg aims to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and become climate neutral by developing a reduction pathway based on its carbon footprint and following this pathway. The GHG emissions of the university as a whole are currently being calculated and monitored, and the university will develop a first reduction pathway including a calculation of its carbon footprint, on which this pathway will be based, by the end of 2025.

Implementation status of this goal: being developed

Goal O.2:

Reduce our energy consumption, increase energy efficiency and the share of self-generated renewable energy

The university aims to reduce its electricity consumption and its energy consumption for heating and cooling (technical equipment). Specific consumption figures have been recorded since 2024. Comparisons in terms of reductions and consumption cannot be made until the next report on the status of the implementation of the sustainability strategy, when the relevant surveys and data will be available.

As a further measure, the university will reduce the share of energy from fossil fuels. 100% of the electricity the University of Würzburg purchases already comes from renewable sources.

¹⁴ Cf. <https://www.nachhaltigehochschule.de/arbeitsgruppen/ag-thg-bilanzierung/>

¹⁵ Cf. <https://ghgprotocol.org/>

Another measure that the university is taking is installing photovoltaic systems on roofs wherever this is technologically and legally possible and economical to do and provided there are no biodiversity issues. The electrical output of the installed rooftop PV systems increased by 70 kWp to a total of 203 kWp in 2024.

In addition, progress has been made on the construction of a ground-mounted PV system with a theoretical output of 2,400 kWp on Campus Hubland Süd; this is scheduled to be built in 2026.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal O.3:

Use resources in a sustainable manner

The University of Würzburg continues to work on embedding sustainability more firmly in its procurement practices.

To use resources in a sustainable manner and reduce materials consumption, the university has a multimedia equipment pool. In addition, the University of Würzburg has a firm commitment to using recycled paper: Since 2018, all papers offered by the university's internal online office supply shop are recycled and bear the Blue Angel ecolabel. Paper consumption (in the central administration) decreased in 2024 compared to the previous year. With this achievement, the University of Würzburg won first place in the [*Papieratlas*](#) competition that honours the most recycled paper-friendly higher education institutions in Germany.

A water management strategy for Hubland Campus (including a rainwater irrigation strategy) is in place.

Waste separation at the University of Würzburg is being and has been developed further. Appropriate measures for sustainable waste disposal, especially in lecture hall buildings, are being developed in the context of the WueMue – Waste Separation, Avoidance and Recycling at JMU Würzburg transformation experiment, which is based at WueLAB. This project involves close cooperation between the university's academic and administrative staff. In addition the Office of Occupational Health and Safety, Animal Welfare and Environmental Protection compiles an annual waste generation and management statistics, which is used as a basis for promoting recycling and waste prevention.

Also, to ensure that resources are used in a sustainable manner, sustainability aspects are taken into account when buildings are being renovated or constructed. Energy standards are presented or available for 43 out of 112 buildings.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented



Example of best practices in the field of campus operations: Papieratlas competition – University of Würzburg awarded the title of ‘most recycled paper-friendly higher education’

100% of the paper that the University of Würzburg uses in administration and university operations bears the Blue Angel ecolabel – this value is up from around 90% in 2023. In this way, the university is making an important contribution to climate protection and the sustainable use of resources: Last year alone, JMU saved more than 657,000 litres of water and almost 148,000 kilowatt-hours of energy by using recycled paper instead of virgin fibre paper. This amount of water is equivalent to the daily consumption of more than 5,400 people combined.



Paper Atlas Award Ceremony



Fig. 4:
University Chancellor Dr. Uwe Klug (third from left) accepted the award in Berlin. Representatives from cities, administrative districts and other higher education institutions were also in attendance. (photo: Sascha Hilgers)

Goal O.4:**Encourage sustainable, climate-friendly transport choices**

A sustainable transportation strategy is being developed for Campus Hubland Nord, which we are planning to discuss across all status groups in a participatory process in the context of the revision of the master planning for Hubland Campus.

Another goal is to increase public transport use among the members of the university. One indicator documented here is the number of *DB Job Ticket* and *WVV Mobil-Firmen-Abo* public transport passes purchased by employees. Both here and in the context of the collection of data on the carbon emissions saved through the introduction of the *uRyde* mobility app, we now have values that can serve as a basis for quantitative assessments in the future.

The use of electric vehicles is strengthened further, and efforts are made to raise awareness of the existing charging infrastructure on campus: In 2024, 10 charging stations for electric vehicles were installed in the underground parking facility of the canteen on Campus Hubland Süd.

In addition to a large number of uncovered bicycle parking spaces on all university campuses, around 200 covered bicycle parking spaces have been built on Campus Hubland Nord to date. There are also around 150 additional covered bicycle parking spaces on Campus Hubland Süd to encourage people to commute by bike.

Implementation status of this goal: being developed

Goal O.5:**Design campus grounds with social sustainability and climate change adaptation in mind**

We want to take a step towards reaching this goal by designing our campus as a space for social interaction and with the needs of the members of our university in mind, also taking into account aspects of climate change, while also ensuring that it serves its primary purpose of providing a research and teaching infrastructure.

To this end, we have created several new places to come together on Campus Hubland Nord, such as the Uni Wü Community's [Ideas Island](#), the [CampusBenches](#) and an [exchange cabinet](#) (both projects are student-led transformation experiments at WueLAB) as well as other projects by the sustainability lab, e.g. the [hands-on wall](#) and barefoot path via WueLAB's *Nachhaltigkeit gestalten* (shaping sustainability) seminar (in cooperation with the *Gesunde Hochschule* workplace health initiative, the university forest and the ecology working group/CampusGarden).

We continue to foster the creation of biotopes; new biotopes are in preparation, for example, as part of the [L\(i\)ebenswerter Campus](#) (livable/lovable campus) transformation experiment.

A survey of the surface area of vertical green (building) surfaces is planned for 2026. Such vertical green spaces serve the purpose of climate change adaptation (cooling, insulation of buildings) and are also valuable in terms of biodiversity.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented



Example of best practices in the field of campus operations: Ideas Island

In a joint effort, a new place to come together was created on Campus Hubland Nord in 2025: The Alumni & Friends e.V. association took action to provide more outdoor seating and further improve the quality of life on campus: A semicircle with plenty of seating, shaded by three large sun sails, was created on the lawn next to the *Mensateria* canteen. Three spaces for group work were also added.



Ideas Island on Campus Hubland Nord



Fig.5:

Sun sails provide shade for the Ideas Island. The Centre for Philology and Digitality (ZPD) is seen in the background. (photo: Robert Emmerich/University of Würzburg)

Goal O.6:**Integrate biodiversity, nature conservation and animal welfare into the further development of the campus grounds**

Several measures are already being taken to integrate aspects of biodiversity on the Hubland Campus of the University of Würzburg: Scientific studies are being carried out on [managed mown areas](#) and in the soil, for example, in order to record, monitor and further develop ecologically valuable and renaturalised green spaces and biotopes. We have made progress on the greening of the campus grounds by planting, grooming and watering trees, shrubs and hedges, which improved soil quality and enhanced biodiversity. It is planned that the continuation of the recording of the number of trees (Campus Hubland Süd and Hubland Nord) and a first soil monitoring station on campus will provide initial orientation for further development in the coming years.

The following measures have been taken to enhance the visibility of biodiversity on campus: Project-based reporting (*L(i)ebenswerter Campus* transformation experiment and [Living Campus](#) initiative), research ([Socio-Ecological Transformation of the Campus](#) transfer experiment) and awareness-raising, for example with the help of the BioBlitz event, where surveys of species are conducted. There is also a [biodiversity path](#) on Campus Hubland Süd that draws attention to and provides information about various biotopes. This means that biodiversity on campus has been made visible to some extent, and the planned extension of the biodiversity path to Campus Hubland Nord will enhance this visibility.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal O.7:**Plan and design Campus Hubland Nord with the future in mind**

With regard to the further expansion of Campus Hubland Nord, the University of Würzburg will take into account the aspects of transportation, biodiversity, climate friendliness and social sustainability when revising the master planning for Campus Hubland Nord. An update of the master planning is being prepared and is scheduled for 2026, as planned.

As part of the BMFTR-funded collaborative REKLINEU project, [four guiding principles \('golden rules'\)](#) for the socio-ecologically sustainable design of Hubland Campus were defined in the context of the Socio-Ecological Transformation of the Campus transformation experiment and published in a booklet.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal O.8:**Further develop operations in the Sailershausen university forest with the future in mind: biodiversity, soil conservation, water management**

To continue promoting the forward-looking development and sustainable management of the university forest, we rely on specific tree species, sustainable felling rates, unmanaged areas and deadwood remaining in the forest. The share of climate-resilient tree species in the forest is estimated at 60%.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Field of action: student initiatives

Student initiatives are highly important and add value. Such initiatives as well as student participation, e.g. in decision-making processes, take place in a wide variety of university committees and initiatives, such as the Council of Student Representatives, the various working groups or the CampusGarden project, and is greatly valued at the University of Würzburg. The commitment of students contributes to the further development of the university as a whole and the well-being of the student body and is encouraged accordingly. A regular exchange between student representatives and the University Board as well as the heads of the faculties has been established.

Goal I.1:

Encourage student initiatives in the field of sustainability

A detailed [strategy](#) has been developed at the sustainability lab to further strengthen communication and transparent, independent debate between the university's academic and/or administrative staff and students on sustainability-related issues. The number of student-led projects and student-led transformation experiments carried out at WueLAB has increased, and students involved in these projects and experiments receive thorough support from staff.

The sustainability lab supports and fosters self-organised teaching projects, such as those within the framework of the [Public Climate School](#) or the CampusGarden project.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal I.2:

Encourage and ensure student participation in the further development of the university, e.g. in decision-making processes

The University Board and student representatives meet monthly to engage in a constructive exchange. Such an exchange between the heads of faculties or institutes and student representatives takes place once each semester.

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal I.3:

Provide incentives and recognition for student initiatives

One measure to achieve this is to create opportunities for students to earn credits for their work on university committees (Student Parliament, Council of Student Representatives, Faculty Boards, Senate etc.). Work is underway to create a way to award credits to students for committee service.

Implementation status of this goal: being developed

Goal I.4:**Create more space for student ideas, joint activities and mutual exchange**

The university has provided and continues to provide funds and rooms to create more space for student ideas, joint activities and exchange between students. Here, the construction of the new [stuv hub](#) Students' House, which was officially opened in the 2025 summer semester, is particularly noteworthy.

Implementation status of this goal: good



Example of best practices in the field of student initiatives:
new stuv hub Students' House

Designed specifically with the needs of the student representatives in mind, the stuv hub is a sustainable timber building constructed on the existing basement of a former barracks building. After the relocation, the building is now once again directly adjacent to the CampusGarden, which is managed by the working group for ecology and sustainability and tended by a large number of students.

The student representatives' office is also located in the stuv hub building. In addition to a large seminar room that can be used for various events and meetings, a conference room has also been set up specifically for committee meetings. The stuv hub provides the student representatives' working groups with plenty of space and room for creativity.



Students' House „stuv hub“



Fig. 6:
New student house "stuv hub" at Emil-Fischer-Str. 90. (Image: Anne Boenisch, WueLAB)

Field of action: exchange with society and transfer

The University of Würzburg engages in and promotes close networking and a fruitful exchange with society in the city and the region as well as at the national and international levels, among other things through internal and external cooperation projects related to sustainability and through membership of sustainability networks.

By communicating sustainability-related research findings and measures to external audiences, the university aims to raise awareness in society of issues relating to sustainable development. In this way, the University of Würzburg acts as a driving force for transformation processes that society as a whole is undergoing in the city and the region. At the same time, the university is increasingly incorporating practical know-how and relevant ideas into its research and teaching and, by doing so, fosters transdisciplinary research (see the 'research' field of action). To this end, details on our discipline-specific, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary activities in research and teaching related to sustainability are being made more widely known. In addition, we point out start-up opportunities in the field of social or ecological sustainability and work to alleviate the shortage of skilled workers, particularly in the field of sustainable development.

Goal E.1:

Inspire socio-ecological transformation in society

To reach this goal, the University of Würzburg is engaging in an academic exchange with the city and the region on sustainability-related issues, which has been intensified in 2024. To raise awareness in society of sustainability-related issues, we have taken measures to make our communication and public relations activities in this area more effective and, for example, offered educational events for the (Würzburg) public, such as lecture series or events held during Public Climate School week.

In addition, the university offers sustainability-related learning opportunities for schools, e.g. events organised by the [Teach'n'Learn Garden](#) (*LehrLernGarten*) or [Teach'n'Learn Labs](#) (*LehrLernLabor*). We also offer training courses on sustainability-related issues for teachers of all school types, cf. example of best practices in this field of action.

The University of Würzburg also holds alumni events on topics related to socio-ecological transformation, e.g. talks by alumni working in the field of sustainability, general talks on the issue or sustainability-related events, e.g. at the Botanical Garden or field trips to the university forest.

In addition, efforts are being made across the university to enhance the visibility and communication of discipline-specific and interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary research on the issue of sustainability or with applications in the field of sustainability. This happens, for example, at the [Zukunftswoche](#) event in Würzburg, at public events in the context of the collaborative [REKLINEU](#) project or with the help of the University of Würzburg's [sustainability map](#).

Implementation status of this goal: good

Goal E.2:**Encourage entrepreneurship in the field of sustainability and among women**

A measure that we are taking to reach this goal is supporting the foundation of start-ups in the fields of ecological sustainability, health, well-being, inclusion, social justice and green and sustainable products.

To enhance the visibility of social entrepreneurship and enhance people's social entrepreneurship skills, we have, for example, launched the [Social Innovators Challenge](#).

In addition, we want to point out the start-up potential of their research to female scientists from STEM subjects. For this purpose, we have launched the [Frauen.MI*N*T.Gründungsgeist](#) (women.STEM.entrepreneurial spirit) initiative.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal E.3:**Alleviate the shortage of academic professionals, especially in the context of sustainable development**

To tackle the multiple global challenges we are facing, society needs academic professionals with an awareness of sustainability-related issues. At the same time, there is a shortage of skilled workers with an academic qualification. To alleviate this shortage, the university wants to make efforts to ensure that more students complete their degrees successfully. In addition to the many general measures it is taking, the University of Würzburg focuses, in the framework of its sustainability strategy, on providing information about potential areas of employment and career prospects, especially in the context of sustainable development. To this end, a job fair is held each year. In addition, information events on a wide variety of fields of study focus on presenting potential areas of employment and career prospects in the field of sustainability.

To specifically address the shortage of skilled workers in STEM subjects, efforts are also being made to get more school students interested in pursuing a degree in a STEM subject. This can be achieved, for example, through the [STEM summer schools](#) at the University of Würzburg. We were able to expand these in 2024 thanks to a generous donation.

Implementation status of this goal: being implemented

Goal E.4:**Network with other institutions and initiatives on sustainability-related issues**

We are active members of and participants in local, regional, national and international networks. These include the [BayZeN Bavarian centre for higher education and sustainability](#) (*Zentrum für Hochschule und Nachhaltigkeit Bayern*) and the [CHARM-EU](#) European university alliance. These networks allow us to exchange knowledge and ideas with other higher education institutions and collaborate with them on specific issues. At meetings of network members and in working groups, we systematically address university-specific aspects of sustainability, develop criteria and work on the implementation of our goals.

Implementation status of this goal: good



Example of best practices in the field of transfer: training courses on sustainability-related issues offered by the Professional School of Education (PSE) for teachers of all school types

In the autumn of 2024, the PSE held a joint autumn conference with the school development coordinators for Lower Franconia, which had approximately 400 attendees. The workshops covered a wide range of sustainability-related topics: the creation of school gardens, cycling in class, presentation of a climate kit, understanding climate change, an educational game on photovoltaics for pre-school and primary-school children and sophisticated physics experiments for students at secondary schools.

In addition, information was provided about the Gramschatzer Wald Forest Experience Centre (WEZ) and the AKTION GRUNDWASSERSCHUTZ – *Trinkwasser für Unterfranken* groundwater protection campaign. There were practical workshops for teachers (knowledge of butterflies), simulations and simulation games in the field of education for sustainable development.

The event was attended by teachers from all school types, teaching-degree students, trainee teachers from all school types, members of the university's teaching staff and headteachers of schools. The team of school development coordinators, which organised the conference together with representatives from the Professional School of Education at JMU, comprised members from all school types.



PSE school development team



Fig.7:
School development team at the fall conference/school development day in Lower Franconia.
(photo: PSE)



Conclusion and outlook

With the help of its sustainability strategy, the University of Würzburg has picked up speed on its path to becoming a sustainable university. The implementation of 13 out of a total of 32 goals can be placed in the 'good' category, the best one of the three categories that have been introduced to evaluate the progress we have made towards reaching our goals. 14 goals are on a promising path ('being implemented'); however, additional efforts will need to be made to pursue and reach them. The examples of best practices presented above illustrate the great relevance and effectiveness of these goals for the university.

The implementation of five goals has proved particularly challenging. These are in the 'being developed' category, and we will continue to work vigorously to implement them. Their implementation is important for the sustainable development of the university. Specifically, this concerns goal R.5 (make research processes more sustainable), goal G.4 (strengthen a sustainable HR policy), goal O.1 (reduce greenhouse gas emissions and become climate neutral), goal O.4 (encourage sustainable, climate-friendly transport choices) and goal I.3 (provide incentives and recognition for student initiatives). The University of Würzburg will work vigorously on these goals in the coming years.

While preparing this report, we collected various quantitative parameters, which will form the starting point for a quantitative evaluation in the 2027 sustainability report. The experience gained while preparing this report will improve our data collection and monitoring processes and will be incorporated into the further development of the next sustainability strategy for the period from 2029 onwards. In addition, we will continue to engage in exchange and collaboration with the BayZeN Bavarian centre for higher education and sustainability, the German Society for Sustainability at Higher Education Institutions (DG HochN) and the CHARM-EU European university alliance.

The visible successes achieved in all fields of action in a short period of time allow us to be confident about the progress we are making towards becoming a sustainable university. Many members of the University of Würzburg show a strong will and great commitment to sustainable development in research, teaching and transfer as well as in all other fields of action. This is reflected, for example, in their constructive collaboration across disciplines and status groups and in their exchange with society. Together with the role-model effect of the examples of best practices, both those listed above and many others, the University of Würzburg has gained momentum that will significantly speed up the further implementation of its sustainability strategy.