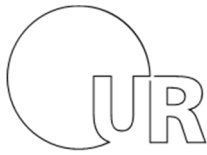




# **SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY**

University Regensburg  
2023 – 2027



Universität Regensburg

# Sustainability Strategy

**University of Regensburg**  
**2023 – 2027**

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## I. Preface

The University of Regensburg (UR) has a special responsibility towards society to contribute significantly to overcoming the major challenges of the future, both through its own operations and by having an impact on society. It is essential both to incorporate sustainability as a central issue cutting across all areas of the university and to initiate effective transformations. All members of the university can make significant contributions to the implementation of sustainability measures. Research and teaching conducted at UR can make important contributions to the discourse on sustainability.

Analysis of the current situation shows that the topic of sustainability has not yet been sufficiently incorporated into the strategic and operational activities of the university. In view of this, this Sustainability Strategy is tailored to UR, to create the framework for assuming greater responsibility for environmental, economic and social sustainability.

This strategy expounds the commitments that UR considers necessary to make, and the processes that need to be initiated to achieve greater sustainability - regionally, nationally, and internationally.

The founding and establishment of the Green Office by the Executive Board in May 2021 represented a first step towards the institutionalization of sustainability at UR, which was further strengthened in May 2023 by its perpetuation and organizational repositioning as a part of the Presidential Department. The appointment of a University Management Sustainability Officer of the University of Regensburg in accordance with Article 30, Paragraph 5 (BayHIG) was a further step in the same direction. These advances complement previous sustainability efforts made by student groups such as the sustainability network (Netzwerk Nachhaltigkeit), measures taken by the Department of Buildings and Engineering and other initiatives by members of the university across all areas of activity.

For the further implementation of the sustainability strategy, it will be important to coordinate the expertise of all members of the university. This can only be achieved if sustainable development is recognized as a task for the whole university, and the involvement and inclusion of all members of the university is supported, promoted, and valued.

## II. Bavarian Higher Education Innovation Act (BayHIG)

The Bavarian Higher Education Innovation Act (Bayerisches Hochschulinnovationsgesetz; BayHIG) highlights sustainability in Article 2, Paragraph 7, Clause 1. It rules that institutions of higher education are tasked with maintaining natural resources and biodiversity, climate protection, and education for sustainable development; and that they are to keep to ethical principles in the fulfillment of their duties. These obligations are made more concrete in the Framework Agreement

(Rahmenvereinbarung Hochschulen 2023 – 2027: Agilität, Exzellenz und Innovation für Bayerns Hochschullandschaft) which was concluded between the Bavarian State Government and the Bavarian universities on June 29, 2023, in accordance with Article 8 Paragraph 1 (BayHIG). The Framework Agreement identifies six fields of activity where sustainability issues come into play: research, teaching, student engagement, governance, campus operation, and knowledge transfer. This is the basis on which this Sustainability Strategy has been developed. This strategy, in accordance with the Framework Agreement, will be complemented by the creation of university-specific Greenhouse Gas Accounting, which is to be updated each year, and by the development of a reduction path to reach the climate protection goals of the Bavarian State Government.<sup>1</sup>

### III. Background

The effects of the climate crisis are already being clearly felt. The overexploitation of natural resources, species extinction, the scarcity and depletion of fossil fuels, and the associated effects on the economic and social system are examples of unsustainable developments. It is more important than ever not only to recognize the climate crisis as a major threat, but to help prevent it and reduce its impact.

The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) views the sustainable, global transformation of the economy and society as a "great transformation" with the core objective of transitioning energy systems, urban areas, and land use systems to climate compatibility. This requires a sustainable change in production, consumption patterns, and lifestyles.<sup>2</sup> Such a transformation cannot be achieved through political frameworks alone but must be supported and adapted by society as a whole. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals provide orientation in this regard.<sup>3</sup>

With respect to education, United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Universities play a central role here.<sup>4</sup> In accordance with the national action plan for education on sustainable development (Nationaler Aktionsplan Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung) from 2017, this goal entails a commitment to education for sustainable development, both with respect to content and structural measures.<sup>5</sup> On

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Bavarian climate protection act (Bayerisches Klimaschutzgesetz). At: <https://www.stmuv.bayern.de/themen/klimaschutz/klimaschutzgesetz/index.htm> (last accessed August 9, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. German Advisory Council on Global Change's Flagship Reports. At: <https://www.wbgu.de/de/publikationen/publikation/welt-im-wandel-gesellschaftsvertrag-fuer-eine-grosse-transformation#sektion-1> (last accessed on September 2, 2022).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Agenda 2030 (SDGs). At: <https://unric.org/de/17ziele/> (last accessed August 9, 2023).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. At: <https://17ziele.de/ziele/4.html> (Last accessed September 2, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Nationaler Aktionsplan Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung At: [https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shared-docs/downloads/files/nationaler\\_aktionsplan\\_bildung\\_fuer\\_nachhaltige\\_entwicklung.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=1](https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shared-docs/downloads/files/nationaler_aktionsplan_bildung_fuer_nachhaltige_entwicklung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1). 2017, S. 62 (last accessed September 2, 2022).

this basis, the Bavarian State Government's sustainability strategy from 2022 also emphasizes the responsibility of universities for education on sustainable development.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, commitment to environmental and climate protection plays an important role, as the Bavarian climate protection act (Bayerisches Klimaschutzgesetz) from 2020 emphasizes.<sup>7</sup> The fact that in the revised version of the act from 2022, the goal of Bavaria's climate neutrality was brought forward from 2050 to 2040 illustrates the increasing urgency of the need to act.<sup>8</sup>

UR is also active at a regional level and cooperates with initiatives such as Green Deal Regensburg and "OHA! – Ostbayern handelt" on issues like transforming energy production, tackling climate change, and reducing the emission of greenhouse gases.<sup>9</sup>

## IV. Understanding of sustainability

Sustainability can be understood as a principle of orientation and action that views ecological viability as the basis for a future-proof social and economic order. The starting points for this are the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The definition of sustainability on which the UR's sustainability strategy is based is specified below.

The economic and social dimensions of sustainability are emphasized alongside the environmental ones in a variety of academic and social discourses.<sup>10</sup> The need to link ecology, economy and social issues in the discussion on sustainability was already stated in the Brundtland Report in 1987. Sustainability or sustainable development is described as an approach that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".<sup>11</sup> In a decision on the transition to climate neutrality in 2021, the Federal Constitutional Court also emphasized that future freedom is based on present action and that climate protection efforts form the basis for this.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bavarian State Government's sustainability strategy (Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie der Bayerischen Staatsregierung). At: [https://www.nachhaltigkeit.bayern.de/einzelziele\\_massnahmen/ziel4.html](https://www.nachhaltigkeit.bayern.de/einzelziele_massnahmen/ziel4.html) (last accessed September 2, 2022) and Chapter III.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bavarian Climate Protection Act 2020 (Bayerisches Klimaschutzgesetz 2020). At: <https://www.gesetze-bayern.de/Content/Document/BayKlimaG> (last accessed September 2, 2022).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Bavarian Climate Protection Act 2022 (Bayerisches Klimaschutzgesetz 2022). At: [https://www.stmuv.bayern.de/themen/klimaschutz/klimaschutzgesetz/doc/klimaschutzgesetz\\_30062022.pdf](https://www.stmuv.bayern.de/themen/klimaschutz/klimaschutzgesetz/doc/klimaschutzgesetz_30062022.pdf) (last accessed September 2, 2022).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Green Deal Regensburg. At: <https://www.greendeal-regensburg.de/green-deal-regensburg> (last accessed September 2, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Hutter, C. P., Blessing, K., & Köthe, R. (2018). Grundkurs Nachhaltigkeit: Handbuch für Einsteiger und Fortgeschrittene, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Brundtland report (Brundtland-Bericht). At: [https://www.nachhaltigkeit.info/artikel/brundtland\\_report\\_563.htm](https://www.nachhaltigkeit.info/artikel/brundtland_report_563.htm) (last accessed October 13, 2022).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. <https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2021/bvg21-031.html> (last accessed September 5, 2023).

The three-pillar model of environmental, economic, and social sustainability has been criticized for failing to prioritize among the dimensions, particularly because planetary boundaries must not be exceeded. It therefore makes sense to prioritize the three dimensions differently, grouping the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals accordingly (see Figure 1). UR's understanding of sustainability is based on this. Issues of environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability are therefore taken into account in calls for applications and appointments of professors when selecting the best candidates.<sup>13</sup> The same holds for the development of degree programs.

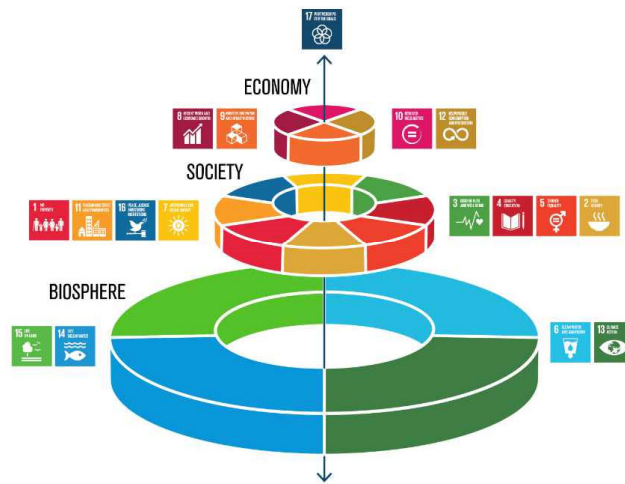


Figure 1: Model of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals Image credit: Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University.

Equality, diversity and internationalization, which are major issues for universities, are also addressed by the UNs Sustainable Development Goals (particularly in Goals 5, 10, 16 and 17). Due to their great importance in their own right, each of these cross-cutting tasks are the subject of separate university strategy papers.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, there are important points of contact and corresponding interactions between these topics. On the one hand, progress in digitalization - another important cross-cutting topic - can contribute to a reduction in resource consumption (e.g. of paper) and more efficient processes. On the other hand, the resource consumption of the IT infrastructure itself - in the sense of "green IT" - must be considered from a sustainability perspective.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The German Research Foundation (DFG) provides guidance in this respect with its continually updated guidelines on taking into account sustainability considerations in research (Leitfragenkatalog zur Berücksichtigung von Nachhaltigkeitsaspekten im Forschungsprozess, see [https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen\\_themen/nachhaltigkeit/leitfragenkatalog.pdf](https://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_themen/nachhaltigkeit/leitfragenkatalog.pdf)).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. <https://www.uni-regensburg.de/chancengleichheit/dokumente-statistik/index.html> and [https://www.uni-regensburg.de/universitaet/praesidium/index.html#content\\_toggle\\_26398](https://www.uni-regensburg.de/universitaet/praesidium/index.html#content_toggle_26398).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. UR's IT Strategy. At: [https://www.uni-regensburg.de/universitaet/praesidium/index.html#content\\_toggle\\_26398](https://www.uni-regensburg.de/universitaet/praesidium/index.html#content_toggle_26398).

## V. UR's sustainability strategy

The working group "campus of the future" (AG Campus der Zukunft) contains representatives of the Student Speakers' Council, the sustainability network (Netzwerk Nachhaltigkeit) and the Green Office. In 2022, on the initiative of the Executive Board, this group began to prepare an initial draft of a sustainability strategy based on the idea of a "whole-institution approach", which was then presented to the Executive Board in January 2023. The Executive Board in consultation with the members and decision-making bodies of the university has used this draft as basis for the UR's sustainability strategy. The strategy forms the basis for achieving the key sustainability goals and moving forward on sustainable development. Implementation, in turn, requires a conceptual commitment to concrete goals and measures that are specific, measurable, attractive, realistic, and come with a clear timeline (see the SMART method).

UR's sustainability strategy defines sustainability objectives for all the university areas of activity listed in the Framework Agreement with the Bavarian State Government. UR has supplemented this with additional sustainability objectives on digitalization.<sup>16</sup> A suitable governance structure provides the framework for implementing these objectives and measures in the substantive fields of action (research, teaching, student engagement, campus operations, digitalization, and knowledge transfer). Therefore, the governance structure is presented first.

### 1. Governance

A clear governance structure with respect to sustainability provides an institutional framework within which the members of the university can contribute to achieving the sustainability goals. Clear structures and responsibilities are required to promote and coordinate sustainability initiatives in the sense of a whole-institution approach and to initiate the necessary transformation processes. A suitable governance structure is therefore the basis for efficiently and durably achieving the objectives in the other fields of activity.

At the beginning of the summer semester 2023, the Executive Board established and filled the office of University Management Sustainability Officer in accordance with Article 30, Paragraph 5 BayHIG. To ensure that sustainability is taken into account in all of UR's decision-making processes and activities, this clear attribution of responsibility in close connection with the Executive Board is necessary. The attachment to the Executive Board was also an important concern of the working group "campus of the future". The aim here is to ensure that sustainability issues are addressed

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. the recently agreed sustainability strategy of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which sees sustainability and digitalization as "twin transformations". At: [https://www.bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/de/bmbf/7/810128\\_Eine\\_neue\\_Innovationskultur\\_fuer\\_Nachhaltigkeit\\_foerdern.html](https://www.bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/de/bmbf/7/810128_Eine_neue_Innovationskultur_fuer_Nachhaltigkeit_foerdern.html) (last accessed October 9, 2023).



throughout the university similarly to other important cross-sectional issues such as equality, diversity, internationalization, and digitalization. Together with the "Sustainability Council for the Future" (see section G 1), the University Management Sustainability Officer will develop sets of measures for the implementation of the sustainability strategy (thereby making responsibilities transparent), support the implementation of the measures, and regularly submit progress reports to the university. The "Sustainability Council for the Future" can also make proposals for improving the allocation of tasks and the cooperation between the various stakeholders in the area of sustainability governance, promoting continuous improvement.

A Green Office was set up at the UR back in May 2021 - based on a concept from the sustainability network (Netzwerk Nachhaltigkeit). Since its foundation, the Green Office has worked in a structured and purposeful manner and has been very successful as a knowledge transfer and contact point for students, employees, and initiatives interested in sustainability. This includes coordinating projects to raise awareness of sustainability among all members of the university and promoting networking between internal and external stakeholders. To date, the Green Office's activities have mainly focused on the areas of student engagement (examples include networking and supporting various student initiatives, such as the working groups "Garden" and "Unifair" and in particular the student initiative sustainability network (Netzwerk Nachhaltigkeit) and its meeting place on campus); knowledge transfer (e.g. during the Sustainability Week with a science stand at the city festival "Bürgerfest"); and campus operations (including important measures such as: biodiversity efforts, mobility concepts, Fairtrade certification process, preparation and submission of a funding application for climate protection management).

To strengthen the institutional structure relating to sustainability and to ensure that strategic considerations relating to sustainability are taken into account across all areas of activity (including the important areas of research and teaching), the Green Office has been relocated. It was moved from Administrative Department V "Buildings and Engineering" to the Presidential Department with a direct link to the University Management Sustainability Officer as of the summer semester 2023. The topic of sustainability and the work of the Green Office will be given more visibility, with new, more central premises, including space to holding events and display information.

In order to draw up UR-specific GHG Accounting in line with the Framework Agreement, update it annually and develop a corresponding reduction path, a Climate Protection Manager was also appointed in the "Buildings and Engineering" department in May 2023 - the position being initially financed on a project basis. The Climate Protection Manager plays a key role in achieving UR's climate protection targets in the short, medium, and long term.

## G 1 Establishment of a Sustainability Council for the Future at UR

Under the leadership of the University Management Sustainability Officer, a Sustainability Council for the Future will be formed as a transformative body and think tank made up of representatives from various groups, all faculties, and central institutions. The aim is to pool the variety of skills, experiences, and needs from across the university and to ensure effective communication and coordination in order to implement the university's sustainability strategy in a targeted manner. In particular, the Sustainability Council for the Future will work with the University Management Sustainability Officer to develop university-wide and faculty-specific proposals for measures to implement the sustainability strategy and thus structurally advance its implementation. The Sustainability Council for the Future may also submit proposals on the further development of the UR's understanding of sustainability and its sustainability strategy.

Regular meetings (at least two per semester) of the Sustainability Council for the Future will ensure the continuity of the transformative processes and guarantee transparency, participation, and productive feedback in the implementation of the sustainability strategy. In addition, the Sustainability Council for the Future can form topic-specific working groups in specific areas of activity, to work on development and implementation. The Sustainability Council for the Future will set itself annual targets derived from the sustainability strategy. In terms of quality management, the goals and measures formulated will be continuously reviewed and improved. Where necessary, new targets will be set, and measures developed. The Green Office will provide administrative support for the Sustainability Council for the Future, coordinate the implementation of the measures together with the University Management Sustainability Officer, and regularly submit progress reports to the university.

The expertise of the various representatives in the Sustainability Council for the Future will ensure the feasibility of measures planned. In this way, existing and future ideas and experiences will be continuously incorporated into the transformation process, increasing the responsiveness and reflexivity of the university's strategic orientation. In order to do justice to the breadth of the university across all areas of activity and the resulting heterogeneous tasks and topics in the pursuit for more sustainability, permanent responsibility for the topic of sustainability will also be created at faculty level - in the form of faculty sustainability officers. These sustainability officers will act as contact persons and multipliers for sustainability topics within their faculties.

Each faculty sustainability officer will be appointed by the relevant faculty council from among the tenured academic staff and professors. These sustainability officers will report to and from their respective faculty councils. The sustainability officers are instrumental for interfaculty communication and cooperation. They will enable sustainability to be implemented on a broad scale in harmony with the freedom of research and teaching.

The Sustainability Council for the Future will be composed as follows:<sup>17</sup>

- the University Management Sustainability Officer (ex officio) as chairperson
- the employees of the Green Office (ex officio)
- the Climate Protection Manager (ex officio)
- for each faculty: the faculty's sustainability officer
- two student representatives and potentially substitute representatives (nominated by the Student Parliament for a term of office of one year)
- two representatives of the academic and artistic staff and doctoral candidates (nominated by this group for a term of office of two years)
- two representatives of the non-academic staff (nominated by this group for a term of office of two years)
- the Chancellor (ex officio)
- Head of Administrative Department V "Buildings and Engineering" (ex officio)
- Head of Administrative Department IV "Finance and Transfer" (ex officio)
- Head of the Computer Center (ex officio)
- The chairperson of the Staff Council (ex officio)

### **Objectives:**

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Establish the Sustainability Council for the Future

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Establish topic-specific working groups of the "Sustainability Council for the Future" (as needed)

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Develop both university-wide and faculty-specific proposals for the implementation of the sustainability strategy, by the Sustainability Council for the Future

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Make the Green Office an operational and strategic player in the area of sustainability across the fields of governance, research, teaching, student engagement, campus operations, digitalization and knowledge transfer. The Green Office provides support for the University Management Sustainability Officer and the Sustainability Council for the Future"

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## **G 2 Communication strategy**

Bidirectional communication between stakeholders inside and outside the university on the challenges and successes of sustainability efforts at UR, on the solutions developed and on recommendations for action are of great importance for motivation, acceptance and leveraging potential. For this reason, the University Management Sustainability Officer will work with the Green Office and the Administrative Division "Communications and Marketing" to develop a communication strategy that takes into account all areas of action as well as communication within the university and beyond. In this regard, possible participation in sustainability-related rankings (such as the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking) will also be examined. In addition to digital formats

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<sup>17</sup> Members of the Executive Board can participate in the sessions at any time.

(including UR's website and Green Office's microsite, social media, newsletters), initiatives at the university or in the city and region such as Regensburg's sustainability week (Regensburger Nachhaltigkeitswoche), science slams, fireside chats, conferences, information stands or displays and exhibitions will be considered and further developed as possible channels throughout the university. Innovative approaches, e.g. from the artistic field, will also be implemented. The visibility of student initiatives related to sustainability will also be increased (see section E 2).

In addition, measures are being developed to recognize special efforts with respect to sustainability by university members, for example through a prize for the best sustainability idea.

**Objectives:**

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Develop a communication strategy to increase the internal and external visibility of sustainability activities at UR

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Investigate participation in sustainability-related rankings

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Develop initiatives to recognize special commitment (e.g. a prize for the best sustainability idea)

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## 2. Research

The understanding of sustainability on which this strategy is based is also incorporated into research at UR. The aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges that arise with regard to sustainable development and to develop strategies for coping with the complex transformation processes that lie ahead. At UR, there is an awareness of the importance of sustainability in research, which is increasingly being articulated by politics, society, business, and academia.<sup>18</sup>

In the area of research, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation in particular is to be strengthened in order to strengthen UR's handprint towards environmental, economic and social sustainability, thereby building on disciplinary competencies and taking into account freedom of research. In addition, UR also pays attention to its ecological footprint with the aim of working as sustainably and with as low a consumption of resources as possible in all disciplines.

### F 1 Leveraging interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary potential

Future-oriented research projects in the field of environmental, economic and social sustainability will be promoted at UR. The highly complex nature of many challenges in the field of sustainability will often make it necessary to look beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries and structures and adopt an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary perspective.

In order to harness this potential, an annual overview of sustainability research at UR is to be compiled and published. Increasing the visibility of existing sustainability research in this way should

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the recent emphasis on environmental sustainability in funding activities by the DFG [https://www.dfg.de/en/service/press/press\\_releases/2023/press\\_release\\_no\\_28/index.html](https://www.dfg.de/en/service/press/press_releases/2023/press_release_no_28/index.html).

reveal interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary points of contact within the university and thus potentially facilitate new collaborations. Such an overview can help students when choosing subjects and setting priorities. Greater transparency also facilitates networking with external partners. The visibility of existing sustainability research can also be very useful for (potential) students in the orientation phase.

The aim is also to create new structures for (interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary) research in the field of sustainability. In this context, the establishment of a Forum for Sustainability at UR will be initiated.

**Objectives:**

- 
- Provide an overview of existing sustainability research
  - Create structures enabling interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary sustainability research
  - Establish a Forum for Sustainability
- 

## F 2 Raising researchers' awareness of sustainability

Article 2, paragraph 7, sentence 1 of BayHIG states that universities have a duty towards maintaining natural resources and biodiversity, climate protection, and education for sustainable development. Furthermore, funding organizations, such as the DFG, increasingly expect reflection and real consideration of (environmental) sustainability aspects in the research process.<sup>19</sup> Given this background, raising awareness of sustainability issues among researchers is of great importance. Funding opportunities for research on sustainability topics should be more prominently highlighted.

**Objectives:**

- 
- Raising researchers' awareness of sustainability
  - Assistance with accessing internal and external funding for sustainability research
- 

## F 3 Sustainable research operations

Research operations at UR will also make a contribution to protecting the climate. Taking into account freedom of research and subject-specific characteristics, the reduction of greenhouse gases, resource consumption and waste generation is aimed for, and the use of environmentally friendly resources is sought. In close cooperation with the faculties, the Sustainability Council for the Future will develop proposals on how resource consumption can be improved, taking into account the specific circumstances of the subject. It will also examine whether it makes sense to certify sustainable laboratories at UR. The individual disciplines and faculties have different requirements in terms of laboratory equipment and can therefore respond better to their individual needs.

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<sup>19</sup> See [www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen\\_themen/nachhaltigkeit/empfehlungen.pdf](http://www.dfg.de/download/pdf/foerderung/grundlagen_themen/nachhaltigkeit/empfehlungen.pdf).

Research trips and official trips can be very greenhouse gas-intensive. Avoiding business trips is, however, contentious as academic advance is made more fruitful and strengthened by personal exchange. There are subject-specific differences that need to be taken into account. Members of the university will keep considering differing formats for communication and the exchange of ideas. In addition, university members will be provided with tools (e.g. in the form of online tools) to assess their ecological footprint when planning business trips and, if necessary, reduce it through more environmentally friendly mobility options. University members are aware of their responsibility in this regard. Sustainable alternatives must be considered for business trips and the strengthening of incentives in this area will be considered. Transformation processes that affect mobility are also addressed in part C, Campus Operations, of this strategy paper.

**Objectives:**

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Reduce greenhouse gases, resource consumption, and waste generation; and use environmentally friendly resources in research operations, taking into account freedom of research and the circumstances specific to the subject (where necessary, supported by relevant guidelines)

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### 3. Teaching

In accordance with the Framework Agreement, UR will raise awareness of the diverse and complex issues of sustainability in its teaching activities. In particular, knowledge about the causes and effects of, and potential solutions to challenges in the area of environmental, economic and social sustainability will be imparted. Students will be supported in developing skills that contribute to overcoming these challenges. As a holistic and transformational educational concept, education for sustainable development (ESD) aims to further develop the goals, content, methods and organization of education.<sup>20</sup> The concept includes the acquisition of methodological and content-related skills and thus supports students in meeting the challenges of transformative change. A professorship in "Education for Sustainable Development" was established for this purpose at UR in 2020. In future, education for sustainable development is to play a substantial role in existing and newly developed programs, and in extending the qualifications of teaching staff.

#### L 1 Education for sustainable development in existing degree programs

Education for sustainable development (ESD) encompasses both methodological and content-related skills and, when related to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, has a broad scope of application. Education for sustainable development therefore has the potential to be integrated into existing degree programs across the university and to be adapted to the specific features of those programs. From a methodological perspective, ESD is about competencies and key qualifications in

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<sup>20</sup> DUK (2014). UNESCO Roadmap zur Umsetzung des Weltaktionsprogramms „Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung“. Bonn.

the areas of sustainable action and bidirectional knowledge transfer as well as critical thinking abilities, which should prepare future decision-makers to confront challenges in an interdisciplinary manner.

As a first step, surveys will be conducted throughout the university to determine which courses are already available in the field of education for sustainable development. This will make it easier for current and prospective students to find out about teaching related to sustainability and, where necessary, incorporate courses from other degree programs into their electives. At the same time, such an inventory will allow those responsible for degree programs, especially those with only limited possibilities for taking electives, to identify existing strengths and weaknesses in their offerings relating to education for sustainable development and, where necessary, to refine them. This overview will be updated and published annually.

In the course of quality assurance, existing and new degree programs will be checked to see whether education for sustainable development is sufficiently taken into consideration, taking into account potential legal constraints. This also includes, for example, the opening of elective modules for courses related to sustainability and the simplification of corresponding credit transfer options. In degree programs that feature broad elective modules, it is straightforward to expand the range of courses pertaining to sustainability in a subject-specific manner. It is also desirable to increase the number of interdisciplinary courses focusing on sustainability.

**Objectives:**

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Create a university-wide survey of and ensure the visibility of existing courses on education for sustainable development
In the course of quality assurance (e.g. when revising regulations), examine the range of courses on education for sustainable development
Introduce new (interdisciplinary) degree programs with a focus on sustainability

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## L 2 Supplementary studies program "Sustainability"

So that all students can acquire sustainability skills going beyond the content and scope of their actual degree program, a supplementary studies program "Sustainability" for education for sustainable development is being set up.

This program will be open to all UR students, who can complete it alongside their regular studies. Against the background of the highly complex, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary challenges posed by sustainable development, this supplementary studies program is intended to offer interested students the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of these issues, which are so important for the future. Students will be trained to become multipliers for shaping a sustainable society. The program will achieve this by expounding the personal requirements for sustainable behavior; promoting the transdisciplinary (knowledge) communication of sustainability issues, the participation

in social decision-making processes; and the design competence to address the challenges ahead. In addition, the program will make the sustainability issues more visible to all involved with teaching at the university, and will contribute to the development of new, innovative courses, which can then also be incorporated into existing programs (see section L 1). This can build on the very positive experiences made with the existing supplementary studies program "Gender Competence" at UR and the considerations of the Bavarian Network for Sustainability in Higher Education (BayZeN) on minimum requirements for such courses (Bavarian Certificate for Sustainable Development).

The Professorship of Education for Sustainable Development will play a key role in the establishment, implementation and coordination of the supplementary studies program. The supplementary studies program will have a scope of between 30 and 45 credit points so that it can be studied within two semesters (but with a maximum of four semesters) so that it is still possible to start the program in advanced semesters. There will be the option of setting a specialization, e.g. in the area of environmental, economic or social sustainability, which will build on the introductory modules. As part of the supplementary studies program, the interaction between external sustainability and internal sustainability (e.g. awareness, connectedness, insight, subjective well-being and self-efficacy), which has received less attention to date, will also be included as an innovative element.

As part of the supplementary studies program, students may potentially get credit for sustainability-related projects pursued on campus in cooperation with the UR Green Office in order to strengthen students' commitment to sustainability.

**Objectives:**

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Establish a university-wide supplementary studies program "Sustainability" for education for sustainable development

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### L 3 Continuing education for members of the teaching staff

In order to promote education for sustainable development, the Centre for University and Academic Teaching (ZHW) will offer all university teaching staff opportunities for continuing education. Relevant formats for communication and the exchange of ideas can also offer opportunities for continuing education. The same is true of participation in the networking hub on innovative teaching formats for education for sustainable development (Innovative Lehrformate für Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung) of the German Society for Sustainability at Higher Education Institutions.

**Objectives:**

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Develop opportunities for continuing education for members of the teaching staff in all disciplines in the field of education for sustainable development

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Create incentives for participation in continuing education in the field of (education for) sustainable development for members of the teaching staff in all disciplines

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## 4. Student engagement

Student engagement is a key driver for sustainable environmental, economic and social development at UR. As the largest group at the university, students have a real potential to shape the future, which should be promoted, appreciated and harnessed. As future multipliers, they can be role models in society, politics and business. Students are made aware of their influence, are given scope for development beyond their studies and they receive recognition. These structures empower students to act sustainably. In this way, UR becomes the birthplace of forward-looking projects and ideas in the field of sustainable development, and it acts as role model.

Student involvement in sustainability initiatives at UR is present in university politics (AStA and university political groups) and in various university groups. The sustainability network (Netzwerk Nachhaltigkeit) is particularly noteworthy. It initiated the annual Sustainability Week, which now takes place throughout the city, with various events relating to environmental, economic and social sustainability. On the organizational side, the Green Office supports the Sustainability Week's planning team (consisting of the city of Regensburg, the network and the Regensburg energy agency (Energieagentur Regensburg)) by organizing a wide range of activities on campus and in the city and the wider region.

### E 1 Central point of contact for student engagement in sustainability

The existing engagement and involvement of students in the sustainable transformation can be further strengthened and promoted through various measures. A contact point for student engagement is particularly important in order to provide student engagement space and greater visibility, and to make participation more accessible. The Green Office has taken on this task to date and should remain the central point of contact for student engagement in the area of sustainability. The working group "campus of the future", which was founded in the process of formulating a first draft of a UR sustainability strategy, will continue to ensure student participation in strategic processes through regular meetings. The following are examples of possible further ways for students to participate, which are to be expanded upon and consolidated in conjunction with the Green Office:

- Establishing a Sustainability Workshop for the Future aimed at the student body with the dual purpose of exchanging and collecting ideas for improving sustainability and giving initiatives space to showcase themselves (at least once a year)
- Regularly recurring information stands on campus to get in contact with students
- Central premises for the Green Office close to where students are

The main tasks of the Green Office include fostering student engagement and increasing its visibility. The Green Office premises are intended to create a presentation / exhibition space in order to be physically visible to the public on the one hand and to offer students the opportunity to become visible themselves on the other.

**Objectives:**

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Establish a regular Sustainability Workshop for the Future as a new initiative aimed at the student body at large to foster discussions and collection of sustainability ideas

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## E 2 Promoting and increasing the visibility of student engagement

Student engagement in environmental, economic and social sustainability is an important component in the implementation of UR's sustainability strategy. Setting up structures to promote engagement in sustainability as well as its recognition and appreciation are essential in order to increase the attractiveness and opportunities for voluntary work in this field.

The Green Office's website serves as a communication platform for student engagement in sustainability. Furthermore, the Green Office helps students to organize events, provides support for marketing and communication processes; and assists in creating continuity for relevant initiatives. The aim is also to provide the Green Office with additional staff on a project-driven basis. Thereby, it will be able to expand knowledge transfer in a targeted manner, particularly via potentially novel communication channels, and create structures for student engagement. The Green Office will thus provide a strategic and participatory communication infrastructure for stakeholders in the field of sustainability. It is essential to employ target-specific communication, to bundle information on sustainability via central channels (e.g. the Green Office website), send target-specific circulars and increase communication on sustainability-related topics via UR's social media channels.

Student initiatives have already generated numerous ideas for events, projects and other measures. Ideas are to be collected and recorded in a structured manner with a Sustainability Workshop for the Future, which takes place at least once a year, but also via other initiatives (see section E 1). The aim is to integrate students' ideas in a participatory process and implement them in a way which does not discourage participation.

**Objectives:**

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Promote student engagement in sustainability and increase its visibility

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## 5. Campus operations

Efforts to improve sustainability of campus operations subsume initiatives with respect to energy consumption, procurement, mobility, waste reduction, nutrition, conservation and animal welfare.<sup>21</sup> With almost 25,000 members of the university, this area is of great importance. It is a key factor in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and on-campus efforts to protect the climate. The Framework Agreement clearly states: Institutions of higher education are making the necessary contributions to the Bavarian state government's climate protection goals of becoming climate-neutral by 2028. They are developing transparent instruments for university-specific greenhouse gas accounting (GHG accounting). As far as possible in accordance with the characteristics of the individual site, the consumption of resources will be reduced, and the use of environmentally friendly resources switched to. This implies the necessity of corresponding strategic transformations at UR.

### C 1 Introduction of EMASplus to achieve climate protection targets

To date, around 20 universities in Germany (approximately 5%)<sup>22</sup> have EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) certification. According to the HIS-Institut für Hochschulentwicklung e.V., there is currently a clear trend for universities towards EMAS certification. As a standardized management tool, EMAS facilitates the improvement of environmental protection performance (with overall concepts for the areas of energy, procurement, mobility, waste as well as nature and animal protection) and provides impetus for comprehensive monitoring to achieve climate protection goals through concrete measures - focused on realistic improvements for the institution concerned.

The "plus" adds social and economic perspectives to EMAS certification.<sup>23</sup> EMASplus is therefore the only sustainability monitoring system that takes a comprehensive view of sustainability and is also internationally recognized and certifiable. Every monitoring cycle leads to a comprehensive sustainability report. With EMASplus, the implementing organization commits to the associated guideline, which refers to 12 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. This is precisely why the introduction of EMASplus is an important building block for campus operations as part of a whole institution approach. Re-certification by accredited EMASplus environmental assessors must be carried out every three years.

To be able to introduce EMASplus, UR first needs EMAS certification. While developing a climate protection concept, which will be drawn up by the Climate Protection Manager over the next two

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. The R&D project on sustainable institutions of higher education (F+E-Projekt Nachhaltige Hochschule: Kriterien zur Bestandsaufnahme; KriNaHoBay). At: <https://www.nachhaltigehochschule.de/kriterienkatalog/> (last accessed December 12, 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Müller, Joachim; Schmidt, Madlin: Umweltmanagement mit normierten Systemen. Die Anwendung von EMAS an Hochschulen - eine fallstudienorientierte Analyse. 2022. At: <https://medien.his-he.de/publikationen/detail/umweltmanagement-mit-normierten-systemen> (last accessed September 30, 2022).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. The EMASplus system. At: <https://www.emasplus.org/das-system> (last accessed January 10, 2023).

years, initial processes will be established that will serve as the basis for subsequent EMASplus certification. By introducing EMASplus and continuous improvement via it, UR will thus be making its contribution to the Bavarian State Government's climate protection goal: climate-neutrality.

University buildings account for almost two thirds of the Free State of Bavaria's real estate stock, and around 40% of greenhouse gas emissions in Germany are attributable to the construction and operation of buildings and infrastructure. To achieve the goal of climate neutrality for the Free State of Bavaria, it is therefore imperative to focus on the renovation and operation of the current buildings of UR, in particular by establishing forms of environmental, energy and sustainability management. Heating, in particular, has a major impact on the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint of the buildings and thus also of the entire university. Future planning processes for new buildings must therefore clearly focus on sustainability. Thus, to achieve the goal of the climate neutrality of the Free State of Bavaria, considerable additional financial and human resources are required so that UR can harness its significant potential effect on the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Regensburg.

In the future, interactions with the state building authority (Staatliches Bauamt) will need to focus more strongly on sustainability (in particular life cycle analyses). Alternatively, construction projects at UR may be carried out independently of the state building authority with UR taking the role of builder to achieve these goals. In the latter case, an increase in personnel resources is a prerequisite.

### **Objectives:**

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#### **Prepare greenhouse gas accounts**

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Create a climate protection concept

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Monitor and report on energy and resource consumption on campus in the areas of energy, procurement, mobility, waste and biodiversity

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Create a catalog of measures as part of the climate protection concept

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Secure EMAS and EMASplus certification

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## **C 2 Sustainable mobility concept**

The professional mobility behavior of UR members has not yet been studied quantitatively. Some universities have already conducted such surveys, finding that their members' travel (e.g. air travel on university business) and commuting is a significant factor with regard to their greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>24</sup> Hence, attention must be paid to both trips on university business and to commuting behavior (i.e., travel between home and university), and the mobility options chosen (e.g. with regard to motorized private transport). The first step is to determine the status quo, which will form an important input for the UR's future climate protection concept. Thereby, it is essential to take

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<sup>24</sup> Documentation of the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany (2020): Zu CO<sub>2</sub>-Emissionen innerhalb des Sektors Wissenschaft und Forschung. At: <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/711188/710ffaad73440bb541a8372f8529af84/WD-8-003-20-pdf-data.pdf> (last accessed January 10, 2022).

into account the planning processes of the City of Regensburg and other relevant local authorities. Close coordination (in particular with respect to, but not limited to, motorized private transport) with the City of Regensburg needs be initiated in order to find common solutions.

**Objectives:**

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Conduct surveys on the mobility behavior of university members
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions of travel and commuting behavior of members of the university
Develop measures to raise awareness of sustainable mobility options (particularly in relation to private transport)
Development of a parking management concept taking into account environmental, economic and social concerns

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### C 3 Framework for sustainable campus operations

It is intended to establish a framework that promotes sustainable behavior in campus operations and makes the choice of a sustainable option a matter of course. Appropriate objectives and guidelines will be developed for this purpose, e.g., with respect to environmental management, procurement, sustainable waste management, energy, real estate / building management, campus design, health management and occupational health and safety.

To take one example: Sustainability must be given even greater consideration in the procurement guidelines. Respective guidelines and information materials still need to be developed by the relevant responsible parties, taking life cycle analyses into account. Such analyses can be used to check which potential environmental impacts arise during the production, use and disposal of a product and the associated upstream and downstream processes. For this reason, it is important to consider life cycle analyses as a criterion in procurement.

The same applies to other approaches in the subject areas mentioned above. Relying on guidelines alone is, of course, not enough. Rather, such a change of culture needs to be embraced by all members of the university. It is therefore crucial to involve all employees to think about appropriate training and measures to raise awareness of sustainability. First, the demand for such training needs to be determined in order to provide such courses and measures together with Personnel Development.

**Objectives:**

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Develop measures to raise the awareness of university members in the areas of waste avoidance and reduction, energy consumption, sustainable procurement and biodiversity on campus
Revise procurement guidelines to include sustainability aspects and develop guidelines on other topics
Actively involve university members in various sustainability topics

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## 6. Digitalization

Digitalization is another important cross-cutting topic with respect to increasing UR's sustainability. Particularly in the fields of research, teaching and campus operations, there are interactions between digitalization and sustainability.

### D 1 Digitalization as a tool for more sustainability in research

In the area of research, the ongoing digitalization of university processes contributes to greater sustainability. Greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by researchers using virtual communication across different locations. At the same time, such communication formats make it easier to establish contact with researchers working on sustainability topics worldwide, opening new potential for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation. The increased use of digital media and lab books reduces the consumption of resources and increases the opportunities for cooperation and communication.

Big data analysis methods are becoming increasingly important for addressing complex questions of environmental, economic and social sustainability. By establishing the new Faculty of Informatics and Data Science, UR has strategically strengthened its methodological expertise in this important area, which also benefits students. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation on sustainability topics that builds on this expertise will receive additional attention at UR.

#### **Objectives:**

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Exploit the opportunities arising from digitalization for sustainable research

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Create structures that enable research at the interface of digitalization and sustainability

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### D 2 Digitalization as a tool for more sustainability in teaching

Virtual teaching and learning environments such as the e-learning platform GRIPS help UR to reduce the use of resources in teaching (e.g. paper) and facilitate communication and interaction between students and lecturers. These possibilities are to be used even more intensively in the future. Another aim is to further increase online access to academic journals and to make more textbooks available as e-books.

The possibility of submitting theses exclusively digitally in the future is being examined, taking into account legal constraints.

Furthermore, it is potentially possible to reach a larger number of students in the field of education for sustainable development using virtual teaching and learning environments that allow for feedback. Thereby a larger number of students can potentially be trained for the upcoming transformation tasks.

**Objectives:**

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Increase the use of digital methods for more sustainability in teaching and to leverage potential in the area of education for sustainable development

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### D 3 Sustainability through and from digitalization

Digitization at UR offers a wide range of opportunities that can make a significant contribution to improving sustainability. Digitization converts analogue data (such as research data) into digital formats that can be further processed digitally. This can save paper and toner for printed documents, handwritten notes or photographs. Digital storage options (hard disks or cloud storage) also enable processing and storing data with low consumption of resources. Networks (e.g. the internet) ensure the real-time availability of data at different locations.

Furthermore, digitalization can not only automate administrative processes at UR, but also make them more efficient, so that, for example, workloads can be reduced, disruptions of administrative processes avoided, and employee satisfaction improved. Increased digitalization, for example through the use of sensors and IoT (Internet of Things), can also help to reduce the energy consumption of UR's buildings by controlling the lighting, heating and cooling systems based on real-time data. In addition, energy consumption can be better understood and reduced in a more targeted manner by using data analysis tools. There are already several projects at UR, such as "Optimization of administrative processes" or "Printing 2.0", which aim to leverage the above-mentioned sustainability potential through digitalization. Further options need to be explored seriously.

At the same time, digitalization is associated with increased resource consumption, which is why the sustainability of digitalization is another important topic. A key aspect here is to reduce the energy consumption of the UR's IT department, in particular the server room, and of IT resources as a whole. To this end, UR is taking the lead in a project on "Green IT", creating a basis for recording resource consumption, to derive long-term measures to reduce this consumption. Other possibilities include the shared use of central IT resources and the reduction of "e-waste" (i.e. possible recycling of electronic devices and careful disposal). Corresponding concepts need to be developed.

**Objectives:**

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Expand digitalization with the aim of strengthening sustainability at UR  
Develop concepts for the sustainable use of IT

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## 7. Knowledge transfer

At UR, it is possible to bring together different societal groups and thus enter into an intensive, mutually beneficial, solution-oriented discussion on sustainability. Through the education, continuing education and training of people who act as decision-makers in all areas of society, UR fosters the transfer of knowledge to society and addresses challenges arising in the real world. In this way,

UR is a forum for the future, enabling discussions and exchange with the aims of contributing to creating and maintaining an environment and society worth living in for future generations. This bidirectional transfer of knowledge is promoted and strengthened through various initiatives (e.g. science communication, events and continuing education programs for the general public, and the support of start-up activity in cooperation with FUTUR).

## T 1 Transfer concerning sustainability topics and knowledge to the public

A communication strategy is necessary to further strengthen transfer concerning sustainability topics. The aim here is to take a holistic view of the sustainability initiatives at UR in its various fields of action and to focus on bidirectional communication with business, civil society and political decision-makers. We aim for transparent, open, target-group specific, internal and external communication around sustainability topics with respect to campus operations, innovative research results and possibilities to actively engage in sustainability initiatives. To this end, in a first step, it is necessary to survey and make transparent the existing competencies and initiatives across the UR (as described in sections L 1 and F 1).

Paying closer attention to education for sustainable development (see sections L 1 and L 2) aims to enable UR students to act as multipliers to the public, who contribute to the transfer of knowledge about sustainability and the necessary transformation processes. Education for sustainable development is already a compulsory part of the teacher training programs.<sup>25</sup>

### **Objectives:**

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Establish initiatives enabling discussion with the public

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Communicate regularly on research and teaching topics related to sustainability

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## T 2 Knowledge transfer in research and teaching

Due to the relevance for society of future-oriented research in the field of sustainability, the transfer of such research initiatives and results is of great importance. Part of UR's educational mission is to provide formats through which research results from the field of sustainability are made accessible to interested parties in society, business and politics, at the regional level and beyond. Such a fruitful exchange also represents an opportunity to identify new issues, solutions and challenges. This will be incorporated into the communication strategy that is drafted (see section G 2).

The UR fosters spin-off activity, and of course this also applies to spin-offs in the field of sustainability. FUTUR, UR's knowledge transfer hub, provides support in this regard. Advisory services in this

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. the examination regulations for teaching I (LPO I), §33.



area, also potentially in cooperation with external partners, are to be continuously improved, networking opportunities identified, and sustainability projects promoted.

**Objectives:**

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Create bidirectional (teaching) formats for exchange about sustainability research

Support spin-off **activity** in the field of sustainability

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### T 3 Strategic partnerships and networks

At the national level, the German Society for Sustainability at Higher Education Institutions and the HIS-Institut für Hochschulentwicklung e.V. perform important advisory and networking functions in the area of sustainability. At the state level, this role is played by the newly founded Bavarian Network for Sustainability in Higher Education here. At the regional level, UR's partnerships focussing on sustainability include those with Green Deal Regensburg and "OHA! Ostbayern handelt e.V." Partnerships with additional networks are desirable. Increased networking with business, politics and society is planned via the communication and event formats already mentioned (see sections T 1 and T 2). Appropriate collaboration on specific issues should be sought in a targeted manner and expanded where necessary. Sustainability aspects should be considered when deciding on partnerships with non-university partners.

**Objectives:**

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Expand and intensify existing networks and collaborations strategically

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## 8.Entry into force and duration

In the course of its quality management, the University of Regensburg will continuously review and optimize its sustainability strategy. If necessary, new goals will be set and measures developed. The sustainability strategy shall enter into force following a decision by the Executive Board. Initially its term lasts until December 31, 2027. The strategy will be evaluated and updated in 2027.

Issued on the basis of the decision of the Executive Board of UR on November 20, 2023.

Regensburg, November 20, 2023

University of Regensburg

- The President -

signed

Prof. Dr. Udo Hebel