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green office

Green Office Green Label

Informational document for student organizations of the University of Groningen
2021-2022

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Introduction

In 2017, the Green Office of the University of Groningen introduced the Sustainability Checklist. This idea rose from the acknowledgement that all parties of the university need to take action to tackle the climate crisis. As associations affiliated with the university play a big part in setting an example for the students, it is important that they also strive for a more sustainable university and thus society.

The Sustainability Checklist is a tool that can be used to measure how sustainable a student organization is. All organizations and associations that are located in Groningen and focus on students of the University of Groningen can participate in the Sustainability Checklist. This is different from the Sustainability Subsidy, which can only be requested by associations that are officially recognized by the CUOS.

If you decide to fill out the checklist and send it to the Green Office, you might be awarded a label in recognition of your efforts. The Green Labels are categorized as bronze, silver and gold. If you are awarded one of the Green Labels, the logo can be put on your site for members and companies to see. In the following years, the association can further improve its sustainable practices and get a higher label.

It is important to note that every organization or association interprets sustainability in its own way. There are no rigid guidelines to make your organization more sustainable, as every association is different and there are many possible ways to work towards this goal.

How it works

A total amount of 100 points can be obtained. These points are spread over three sections:

- Organization (70 points)
- Facilities (20 points)
- Career and Education (10 points)

All associations need to fill out the section on 'organization.' The other two sections only need to be filled out if they are applicable to your association. The amount of points that can be obtained for each subsection can be found in the checklist. For each topic, the committee that assesses the label applications will award either the full amount of points, half of the points or no points. The final 'score' is calculated by dividing the obtained points by the total amount of points that could be awarded in your association's situation. By using this method, associations of all kinds can apply for a label and have an equal chance of receiving one.

Organization

The first section is applicable to all associations. If this is not the case for any reason, the association is not eligible for a Green Label. This is an overarching section regarding the general operations of the association concerning (waste) policy, paper use, catering, inventory, mobility and motivating members. 70 points can be obtained in this section.

Facilities

The second section only applies when there is a facility on which the association can exert influence, such as a board room, members room, premises or club house. This section concerns energy use, furnishing and decoration, and working environment. 20 points can be obtained in this section.

Career and education

The third section applies to associations that are related to the career perspective and education of the members. In general, this is the case for study associations, but may also be applicable to student organizations that are responsible for the development of their members in this field.

10 points can be obtained in this section.

If you feel like this checklist does not cover all your efforts, make sure to list these efforts in the additional part. Three bonus points can be obtained here.

Proof

It is important for us to know that the statements you are claiming to make in the checklist are true and sustainable. Therefore, appropriate evidence should be provided when filling in the checklist. This evidence can be provided in the form of citations, photos and screenshots of orders or documents. If possible, send the policy plan, budget and strategic plan along to enforce your statements. In cases where the sustainability of a certain item or action could be questioned; articles, sites and journals can be linked to provide proof that it is in fact sustainable. Also books such as 'De verborgen impact' from Babette Porcelijn can be used. This book, among others, can be borrowed from the Green Office. To provide an example: cotton bags are often seen as a sustainable alternative to plastic bags. However, when you want to give out sustainable goodie bags, it is better to provide unbleached paper or bio-plastic bags. This is because the production of cotton bags emits a lot of CO₂ and uses a lot of water and they will usually not be reused often enough to make up for this.¹

¹ <https://www2.mst.dk/Udgiv/publications/2018/02/978-87-93614-73-4.pdf>

Labels

The distribution of labels will adhere to the following ratio of obtained points to maximum points. The ratio naturally takes into account whether or not your association is relevant for the checklist categories 'facilities and 'career and education'.

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Gold label | 0.85 - 1.0 |
| Silver label | 0.7 - 0.85 |
| Bronze label | 0.5 - 0.7 |
| No label | 0.0 - 0.5 |

Procedure

Use the provided template when filling out the checklist. This template is attached to the same email as this document and called 'Template Green Label Student Organizations 2021-2022'. The filled-out template needs to be sent to greenoffice@rug.nl before the deadline stated in the email you received.

Each topic in the template should start with a description of how the association is involved with that subject. For example, if the topic is waste, start with describing which types of waste are created and approximately in what quantities at your association.

Next, describe how the association is (or is not) managing to be sustainable regarding that topic, as well as the changes that are/were made in the academic year of 2021 - 2022. Be concise and clear in your description. If a checklist was submitted last year, you can copy relevant information into this year's checklist to save some effort. If you do this, clearly state so in the explanation. In case of overlap between sections, you do not need to write down the same thing twice. Simply refer to the other section, e.g. "*For a description of how we prevent food waste, see section B2*".

It is important to provide support, reasoning and explanation for why you consider the changes you have made 'sustainable'. Do your research before writing down the sustainable changes. This knowledge can be used to explain how these changes contribute to a more sustainable association.

Example answer regarding paper use:

"Our association has stopped printing the agenda and policy for the GMA in previous years. We also only print the almanac for lustrum years, which was not the case this year. Currently, we still use paper for promotion of events through posters and flyers. Program booklets for our yearly symposium were also always printed. This year we have decided to stop printing flyers altogether, saving around 200 A4 sheets per year. Committees are now encouraged not to print more than three posters per event and focus mostly on online promotion. The program booklets for the symposium will still be printed as this was a requirement for some of our sponsors who are included in the booklet. We encouraged the symposium committee to print the booklets on FSC recycled paper, [this](#) paper shows that this type of paper has a positive environmental impact compared to conventional paper.

Award ceremony

An award ceremony will be organized to award the labels to associations that have received enough points for a bronze, silver or gold label. After the award ceremony, feedback will be provided including the amount of points you received for each subsection. The outcome of the checklist is not open for discussion. General feedback on the checklist is welcome.

Checklist categories and point division

This checklist shows what topics will be covered and how many points can be obtained in each category. Use the other document called “Template Green Label Student Organisations 2021/2022” to fill in your answers. This document includes topics within each category that must be addressed.

| Organization | | Points |
|---|--|--------|
| A. Sustainability in the policy/strategic plan | To ensure that the association is directed towards sustainability and to show this to the members and future boards, it should be included in the policy plan/strategic plan. When these plans are composed, link these to the sustainability goals in the Roadmap of the University of Groningen. | 6 |
| B. Waste | <p><i>1. Separation of waste</i></p> <p>Discuss how waste is recycled in the facilities of the organization and during activities.</p> | 4 |
| | <p><i>2. Reduction of waste</i></p> <p>Discuss how the organization generates less waste. Include in your explanation how the members are motivated and facilitated to use less resources.</p> | 6 |
| C. Paper use | Discuss how paper use is reduced. Discuss the policy on printing. Describe how the choices on amount and type of paper for printing are made. This website indicates on the base of various labels how sustainable a paper source is. | 4 |
| D. Catering | <p><i>1. Vegetarian/Vegan food</i></p> <p>Discuss how the organization reduces the consumption of animal products and how members are informed about the positive impact eating plant-based. Take the possibility to indicate a preference to eat vegetarian/vegan along in your explanation.</p> | 5 |
| | <p><i>2. Local and seasonal food</i></p> <p>Discuss where the food that is used during activities is bought and where this food originally comes from. On the website of ‘Het Voedingscentrum’ you can see what vegetables are in season for the time of the year.</p> | 3 |
| | <p><i>3. Leftovers</i></p> <p>Discuss what happens to the leftovers from activities involving food.</p> | 3 |
| E. Inventory | <p><i>1. Gadgets</i></p> <p>Discuss the process of purchasing gadgets. Include the choices that are made concerning the product line of the association.</p> | 5 |
| | <p><i>2. Use of items</i></p> <p>Discuss the items that are used during activities for the course of the activity and the decoration.</p> | 3 |
| | <p><i>3. Clothing</i></p> | 5 |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|---------------|
| | Discuss the purchasing of committee clothing or team clothing. Include what happens to this clothing after the year ends and the materials. | |
| F. Mobility | <p><i>1. Travel</i></p> <p>Discuss the transportation of the members and visitors to activities. Within this category, think about company visits, sports matches, congress organization etcetera. Include when public transport, bicycles, cars and planes are used.</p> | 6 |
| | <p><i>2. Logistics</i></p> <p>Discuss the ordering of parcels by the association. Think of the frequency of ordering, origin of the product and reasoning of ordering rather than buying local.</p> | 5 |
| G. Motivating members | <p><i>1. Activities</i></p> <p>Discuss how many activities focus on sustainability-related topics or raise awareness out of the total amount of activities organized.</p> | 6 |
| | <p><i>2. Exemplary role</i></p> <p>Discuss how the association expresses the path to sustainability. Include social media and how sustainable initiatives are highlighted. If applicable, also include in your answer how the label from last year is showcased.</p> | 5 |
| H. People | <p><i>1. Mental health</i></p> <p>Do you actively support and maintain the mental health of your members? Discuss how and why.</p> | -2 / 0 / +2 * |
| | <p><i>2. Inclusion</i></p> <p>Do you consider inclusion of all types of members into the association/organization? Think of (accessibility for) less abled members and nationality.</p> | -2 / 0 / +2 * |
| | Total | 70 |

**elaboration for points obtainable under H. People:*

Awareness on mental health under the members of your association, as well as inclusion of members is fundamental to the functioning of an association. The well-being of members is a pillar of social sustainability. Therefore, the People category is scored as follows:

- When too little care goes out to mental health and inclusion you are scored (-2).
- When sufficient care goes out to mental health and inclusion you are scored (0).
- When fitting and special care goes out to mental health and inclusion you are scored (+2).

| Facilities | | Points |
|---|---|---------------|
| A. Energy use | Discuss what measures are taken to reduce the energy use of the association. Include the lighting, heating and use of electrical devices in your explanation. Note: clarify what the association can and cannot influence. | 8 |
| B. Sustainable furnishing / decoration | Discuss how the facilities are furnished and decorated. Include where the furnishing is bought and how the furnishing is maintained. | 6 |
| C. Housekeeping | Discuss how a healthy working environment is maintained. Include clean air, ergonomic seating and clean surroundings in your explanation. | 6 |
| | Total | 20 |

| Career and Education | | Points |
|--|---|---------------|
| A. Highlight sustainable career opportunities | Discuss where the sustainable career opportunities lie in your field of study and how these are highlighted. Also include the method in doing this (congress, case, presentation, social media etcetera.) | 5 |
| B. Sustainable education and research opportunities | Discuss how courses, minors and other sustainable education options are highlighted. | 5 |
| | <i>Total</i> | <i>10</i> |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Additional | In case there is anything else you feel you haven't had the opportunity to describe, describe it here. |
|-------------------|--|