



rijksuniversiteit
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green office

Informational document Green Office Sustainable Subsidy

Green Office External & Research 2019-2020



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Preface

This document is directed to all association boards willing to make their association more sustainable this year. You received this document because of your association's eligibility for the Green Office *subsidy* and perhaps also the Green Office *label*. The Green Office *subsidy* is made available for all organizations affiliated to the University of Groningen, while the Green Office *label* is currently only available for study associations. This year, it will be examined whether we can expand this initiative as well.

In this document you will find the Green Office's definition of sustainability, along with several suggestions to achieve/work towards this and explanations on how the Green Office can help you achieving your goals. The subsidy application conditions and planning of the year are attached in the same email. By applying for a subsidy, we hope to facilitate an easier transition to a more sustainable association. Above all, becoming more sustainable is a matter of willingness and we hope you will work to be a more sustainable association this year.

If anything is unclear or you want more advice, do not hesitate to contact the Green Office at greenoffice@rug.nl!

Nienke van Wees
External & Research 2019-2020



Sustainability goals

The Green Office is the sustainability department of the University of Groningen. Our aim is to make sustainability an integral part of our university. We try to achieve this goal through different approaches. For instance, we initiate and coordinate sustainable projects and initiatives; we influence policies and business operation related to different areas, such as catering and waste management; we also inspire student and staff to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. What we do is very broad, from interfering with the catering to checking the building plans of the new and existing buildings and scaling up the recycling policy. Below, you can see the roadmap which was developed by the Green Office five years ago, regarding the sustainability goals that we want to achieve within the university.

UG Sustainability Goals 2015 - 2020



One of the most important parts of the Green Office is that we aim to achieve *Sustainability* in all its aspects, including the environmental, social and educational sustainability. Not only the environment is taken into account when defining sustainability. ***Sustainability is about creating a situation that is durable and can be sustained for a long period of time in different areas.*** The Green Office defines sustainability based on the People, Planet, Performance principle:

- People

The people part focuses on improving the (mental) health of university students and employees, providing them with a pleasant working and study environment, designing projects targeted to work-related stress, vitality and employability. As an example, you can think about reducing stress levels and the food you consume.

- Planet

Although there are multiple sides to this aspect, and many discussions about what is wrong or right, striving to save the planet is the main goal. Here, you can think about lowering the



Greenhouse gas emissions, preventing pollution and saving water. Actions that positively affect these aspects are of course stimulated, but also actions that raise awareness can have a large impact.

The planet part is focused on reducing our negative impact on the environment. We target different areas within the university, including water and energy consumption, waste management, mobility, biodiversity and CO₂ emissions. We take part in designing policies and projects at the university level, and we create awareness and stimulate more responsible behaviors in students and staff.

- Performance

In the performance part, we focus on embedding sustainability in research and education. We aim to achieve this by organizing lectures, workshops and collaborating with academic experts and students on sustainable research projects. As more and more people will be working in the field of sustainability in the future, many disciplines will shift towards a stronger focus on this. Preparing the students for this change can support them in acquiring more knowledge and being well prepared for the job market.

Why become more sustainable?

There are countless reasons why you should strive for a more sustainable association! We are assuming that you are aware of the biggest and most pressing ones, but some of them might not directly come to mind. Listed below are a couple that are relevant for your association:

- The environment

The current trend of using resources as if they are unlimited will not be maintainable in the long run. Moreover, our current CO₂ emissions are found to be the main cause of climate change. Our behavior is negatively impacting the environment itself through biodiversity loss, deforestation, and melting Arctic ice, but also people, who are increasingly affected by desertification, extreme weather conditions as well as water and air pollution. It is important to remember that your actions are affecting the planet as a whole.

- Collaborations with external parties

An increasing number of companies are paying more attention to sustainability and therefore becoming more aware and selective of the parties they collaborate with. If your association stays behind in this area, it might affect the willingness of companies or other organizations to collaborate with you. Of course, this will not be relevant for all associations and companies, but it may be very beneficial for you to be known as an association that pays attention to the environment.

- Save money



Becoming a more sustainable association can also benefit your finances. For instance, using less disposable goods, substituting them with reusable ones, can save the costs of buying the same thing over and over again. When a large expense has to be made to create an impact, there is always the possibility to apply for a subsidy.

- Responsibility

Even though personal commitments matter, an individual cannot make the necessary change on his own. An organization, however, can guide many individuals into a greener lifestyle and provide them with opportunities to do so. You are in the unique position of being a good role model for all the members of your associations, therefore having a much larger contribution in tackling climate change and social issues/injustices. Having a common goal may also be good in increasing a sense of cohesion among the members of your association.

- Fun!

Being sustainable also means having interesting and fun activities to increase awareness and motivate the members of your association. Psychology tells us that doing the right thing makes people feel good physically and mentally. Do not underestimate the importance of feeling good while doing the right thing!

Above all, as most associations can still gain a lot regarding sustainability, implementing sustainable changes can lead to large improvements, which might even be rewarded with a Green label.



What to do?

As a lot of associations ask about concrete steps they can take in becoming more sustainable, here we provide a list of options for you to think about. Of course, not every measure is suitable/relevant for every association. It is about doing what you can do, little bits help too!

If you have additions to this list, please mention them to us. As the common goal is to make the world a better place, every idea can be used to inspire others to take this step as well.

Office and members lounge

As the office is a place where the board spends a lot of its time and the members lounge a place where generally a lot is consumed, several improvements can be made that will decrease the use of electricity and plastics on a daily basis.

- Recycle your garbage when possible
Check if your members know how waste separation works in the municipality of Groningen. If you have doubts, consult the municipality website [here](#)
- Ban single-use items
 - Replace plastic cutlery with bamboo/metal/wooden cutlery. Metal cutlery would be best here, since this can be washed and reused indefinitely. Find some cheap cutlery at a second hand shop!
 - Avoid plastic dishes, if you need disposable ones buy paper ones
 - Replace normal paper cups by mugs. If this is not possible, use FSC-certified paper cups and encourage your members to use a cup for all their coffees in the day
 - Although straws are necessary for ‘rietadtjes,’ they can easily be replaced by metal or bamboo straws
- Use refillable items (f.e. dishsoap)
- Turn the lights off when leaving the room
- Use fluorescent lamps (CFLs) or light-emitting diodes (LEDs)
- Install eco-friendly A-label devices (f.e. a dishwasher) – but only if you already need to get rid of an old device. Producing these types of things are quite impactful on the environment.
- Keep the room temperature on maximum 20 degrees. Motivate your members wear warm sweaters in winter, rather than raising the thermostat. If possible, lower your thermostat to the minimum for the night!
- Insulate your building. Small steps can be taken by using insulation strips for your windows and insulating foil behind the radiators, so that less heat escapes
- Use Ecosia as standard searching engine instead of Google



- Turn the computers off instead of putting them on standby when you are leaving at the end of the day
- Place cleaning air plants in the room (f.e. Monstera Deliciosa)
- Use ergonomic ball/chairs to maintain good posture during a day of working
- Use eco-friendly dishwashing soap and cleaning detergents. Tip: if your members are using lots of dish soap, dilute it in a spray bottle with water and put that by the sink rather than the original package!
- Use (organic cotton if possible) towels instead of paper napkins for the bathroom, someone's parents might have a few old ones left over!
- Use non-plastic biodegradable sponges, or wash your sponges together with towels so you can use them for longer
- Use water flow regulators for your sink to save water
- Buy eco-certified toilet and kitchen paper (preferably: use washable cloths for the kitchen)

Catering and food

One of the largest sources of CO₂ emissions and plastic is the food industry. As associations often offer dinner, drinks and/or an assortment of snacks to their members, changes in these aspects can help you in becoming a greener association.

- Use less/no meat and dairy
 - Give members the opportunity when signing up for an event to eat vegetarian/vegan, or make veggie the default option!
 - Use local, organic meat
- Promote sustainable alternatives when ordering food (e.g.. look if the snack bar/restaurant uses sustainable wrapping, uses sustainable transport or if it sells organic, seasonal or local food)
- Do not sell plastic water bottles, stimulate students to bring their own bottle
- Buy in bulk
- Sell sustainable soft drinks/beer/wine in glass bottles instead of plastics
- Buy locally produced food
- Provide fruit as a snack, possibly local and seasonal
 - If you do not know which fruits and vegetables are seasonal, this [website](#) allows you know how sustainable is each type of fruit and vegetable for every period of the year
- Change regular tea bags by compostable ones or loose tea
- Buy organic and fair-trade coffee; also try coffee substitutes (f.e. barley coffee, chicory)
- Do not throw out leftover food, give it to members or the food bank



Organization

By obliging certain measures, you can lead the students into a more sustainable lifestyle, without encountering negative effects.

Remember that if you want to motivate your members to behave in a more sustainable way. You, as an association, need to set a good example and show you are taking responsibility. Here some suggestions:

- Switch to a sustainable and ethical bank (e.g. Triodos/Volksbank/ASN)
- Support a charity that focuses on social or environmental sustainability
- Allow members to fill in potential disabilities on the sign-up form
- Promotional items
 - Items without a due date, so nothing will have to be thrown out
 - Minimalize printing flyers/posters
 - Use FSC paper for flyers/posters
 - Biodegradable stickers
 - Sustainable promotional gifts, you can order them for example at [Greengiving](#)
- Re-use costumes (place a large crate/closet in the members' lounge for costume sharing)
- Re-use decorations
- Give away eco-friendly condoms
- Don't reimburse the cost of plastic bags, stimulate members to bring their own
- Clothing
 - Re-use committee clothing (Shirt a la Minute can change the print)
 - Use organic cotton

Event

In general, there are two options making your event more sustainable: decreasing the impact on the planet and giving your event a sustainable theme.

- Give sustainable gifts to speakers
 - A plant
 - A piece of rain forest (f.e. <https://www.adoptrainforest.com> or <https://www.treedom.net/en/>)
 - Local products (e.g. Groninger koek)
- Introduction camp/members weekend
 - Let students bring their own cutlery, cup and plate
- Transport
 - Take public transport where possible
 - Take electrical options when traveling by car/bus
 - Stimulate riding bike
 - If flying is necessary, give option or obligate flying 'CO₂ neutral'
- Create awareness



- Warm sweater day (07/02/2020)
- CleanUp day
- Climate march
- Give a workshop with a sustainability theme (e.g. mindfulness, sewing)
- Goodie bag
 - No more flyers
 - Bag made of biodegradable material/no bags at all
 - Only permit effective gadgets that people use

Education

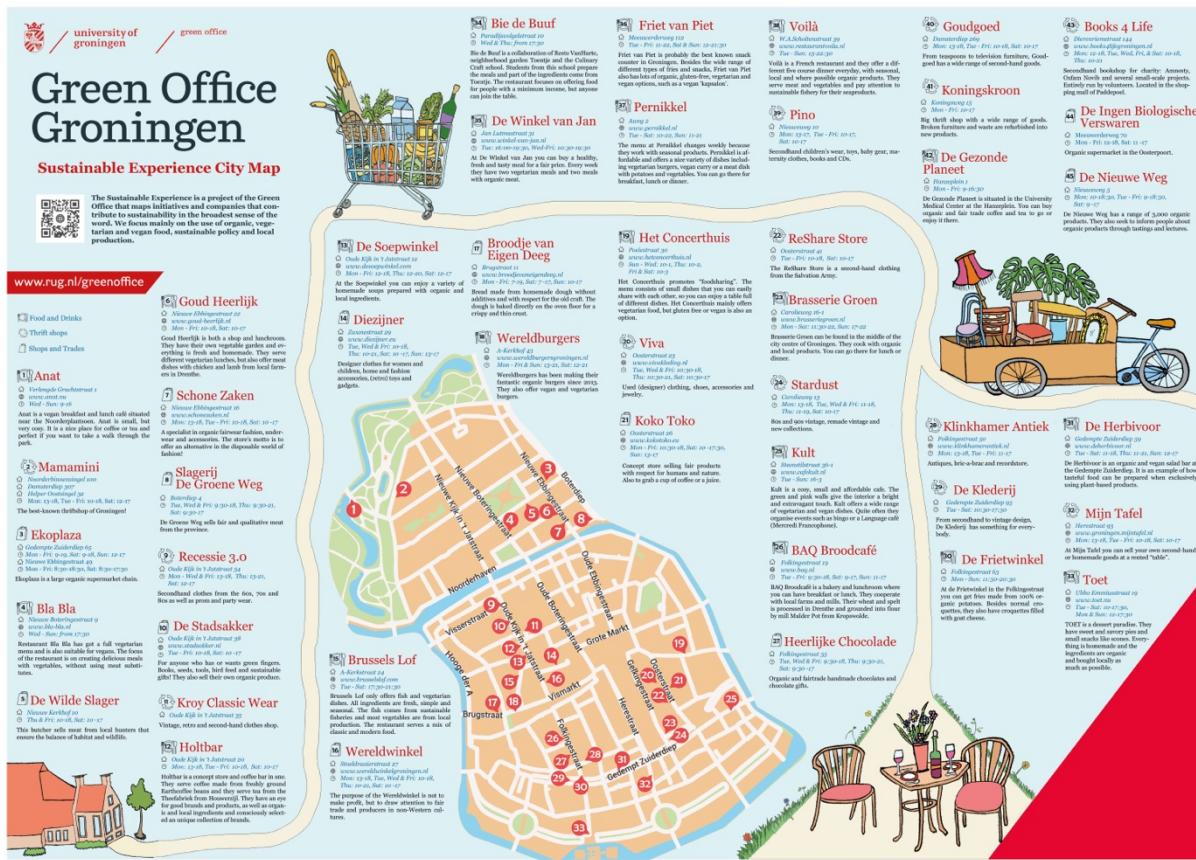
- Stimulate borrowing and selling study books to other students
- Highlight sustainable education
- Create a pub quiz or a game to educate your members about sustainability



How to achieve this?

The Green Office has developed a city map of Groningen which provides an overview of all the green initiatives. When you need to buy an item, keep these places in mind. For example, you can find a party dress-up outfit at Recessie, and your new lounge sofa at Mama Mini. An updated online version of this map will be available soon on our website!

When you are looking for a sustainable option and do not know how or where to find it, you can always contact us, as we are in contact with a lot of sustainable companies, initiatives, and experts on different fields (e.g. environmental engineers, energy experts, environmental psychologists).



Next to this, you can sign up for the [newsletter of the Green Office](#) for endless inspiration!