

## **1. Introduction**

The University of Groningen is a socially responsible education institution and has made sustainability one of its core values. Our plans and ambitions for sustainability have been set out in the *Roadmap 2015-2020*. The current pamphlet is a summary of this roadmap, in which we present all the key points in a clear overview. It is not only our intention to inform you, we also want to hear your opinions and ideas. These could be ideas about animal care and animals in the environment, or about the social aspects of sustainability such as inclusive recruitment and long-term employability. Our hope and aim is to create a broad support base for our sustainability ambitions in cooperation with as many stakeholders as possible. We are convinced that this is the only way to achieve our ambitions in this area.

## **2. Teaching**

Sustainability is not limited to a single subject or discipline. We encourage staff and students from all faculties to engage with the issues and dilemmas associated with this topic. As a result, sustainability is increasingly becoming a matter of course in the various teaching curricula.

1. Integrate sustainability in teaching curricula.
2. Improve communication with staff and students on the theme of sustainability by promoting and supporting events, symposia, lectures and courses relating to this theme.
3. Encourage staff to maintain their employability and continuously develop their talents (each year twenty-five per cent of all employees use the services of Talent Travel and the Corporate Academy).

## **Interview**

‘If we don’t do anything we will soon have a big problem’

Kristiaan Peters  
(PhD student)

I am convinced that the current global situation is unsustainable. More and more people are enjoying the same wealth as us, which is only logical, however our natural resources are becoming scarcer. If we don’t do anything we will soon have a big problem. I started studying corporate sustainability in 2005. At the time, the topic was not very high on the social agenda, for example the University did not offer any lectures on sustainability. But times have changed. I am currently participating in research on sustainable product development: what motivates a business to develop green products? We have found that, although there are plenty of good ideas, the problem lies in marketing them commercially: green products do not sell as well and so profits are lower. To resolve this issue, businesses typically look for technological solutions: how can we produce more efficiently? Our research concluded that there is another solution, namely to switch to selling services. Instead of buying a light bulb,

consumers will buy the amount of light they require. This will encourage businesses to create more sustainable products.

### **3. Business operations**

Alongside teaching and research, we also want to shift the focus of our daily business operations from profits to value. For example, we want our purchasing policy to generate maximum sustainability by making it as green and as socially and economically responsible as possible. We are also striving to create a CO<sub>2</sub> neutral organization and we want all our staff and students to be able to work and learn here in a healthy and sustainable environment. We consider the needs of our staff throughout all the phases of their working lives and we adjust our operational and employment conditions accordingly. As part of our social responsibility, we have made our recruitment policy as inclusive as possible.

4. Become a CO<sub>2</sub> neutral organization by 2020, whereby the organization's greenhouse gas emissions are compensated.
5. At least 30% energy savings in 2020 compared to 2005.
6. Obtain at least 25% of energy requirements from renewable sources such as underground energy storage or solar energy.
7. Water consumption in 2020 equal to or less than the 2008 level.
8. Reduction of total waste production in 2020 by at least 15% compared to 2005.
9. Separation of at least 70% of all University waste.
10. Where possible, the standard for all the University's newbuild and renovation projects will be BREEAM excellent (4 stars). (BREEAM is a system that awards between 1 and 5 stars for building sustainability.)
11. Ecological management of the campuses, with a focus on native flora and fauna and respect for the requirements of the users.
12. 100% sustainable purchasing policy: as green and socially and economically responsible as possible.
13. The University will pay extra attention to the health and vitality of its staff.
14. Promote sustainable mobility, for example by encouraging bicycle use.

### **Interview**

'Fairtrade and organic is the way to go'

Maud Kruizinga  
(Food & Drinks team leader)

I am Food & Drinks team leader for the central city campuses. I am responsible for running the three restaurants and two coffee bars in the Academy Building and the Harmonie Complex. My work is very diverse: I consult with the other staff, help decide on new products and I keep an eye on our finances. My main concern is that my team can work in a pleasant atmosphere where they can perform at their best. At the same time, I also want to put the knowledge and experience of each of them to the best possible use, which is why I invite all staff to offer suggestions for improving the day-to-day running of the Food & Drinks department. Sustainability plays an important role in my work in various ways. For example, we purchase products from green suppliers, such as our Fairtrade and Organic certified coffee. We also recycle as much as possible: all serviettes and disposable cups and plates used in the restaurants are biodegradable. Food production has a major impact on the environment, so we

need to make sure we do it sensibly and economically. I make sure that nothing in our restaurants is thrown away unnecessarily; we always try to find new uses for leftovers.

#### **4. Research**

We will encourage our researchers to conduct more research into sustainability. The University of Groningen distinguishes three research priorities: Healthy Ageing, Sustainable Society and Energy, whereby the latter two have a strong focus on sustainability.

14. *Healthy Ageing*. How can we stay healthy, happy and socially active for longer? Which factors govern our physical, psychological and social wellbeing?
15. *Sustainable Society*. Which changes are desirable and/or acceptable for our society? Which social and cultural facilities are required for a society to function properly?
16. *Energy*. How can we best facilitate the transition to a sustainable society? How can green energy be structurally integrated in the energy distribution chain?

#### **Interview**

‘People actually do make environmentally friendly choices’

Linda Steg  
(Professor of Environmental Psychology)

Environmental problems are ultimately caused by behaviour. This means that we need to gain more insight into the motives behind the choices people make if we want to find effective solutions. Discussions on this theme often emphasize what people are *not* doing, for example that they are not giving the environment enough priority and that they primarily act out of self-interest. However – as our research reveals over and over again – people actually do make environmentally friendly choices and act in ways that do not serve their own interest, such as spending money on green products. They make these choices because they are intrinsically motivated. Doing something for the environment feels good (psychologists call it the ‘warm glow’ effect). In some cases, this effect is even more important than the small long-term financial benefits involved (for example from investments in solar panels). We also provide advice to policymakers in the Netherlands and the rest of Europe; there is a lot of interest in the knowledge our research generates. If we can improve our understanding of why people display sustainable behaviour, we will be able to motivate even more people to make sustainable choices.

#### **Interview**

‘With an e-bike I can beat the strongest autumn winds’

Nonhlanhla Dube  
(PhD student)

Every day, I bike from my home in Haren to the Duisenberg Building on the Zernike complex and back again, a total distance of 22 kilometres. Because I have little time for sports, this is the ideal

way for me to stay fit. But in the autumn, with its strong winds, it can be tiresome. When it really blows I take the bus, which is a pity for the environment. However, I recently found out how to easily beat the wind: I borrowed an e-bike from the University in November and I really liked it! If my commute was a few kilometres longer, an e-bike would be a great alternative to my normal bike in the other seasons too.

In my homeland, Zimbabwe, most people use cars to get around. I think it would be good thing if Zimbabwe were to develop a bicycle culture like the Netherlands has. It would greatly improve living standards at the individual level. Of course, it would also be good for the environment, particularly in a country like Zimbabwe where the effects of climate change are having a major impact.

## Colophon

Co-production between Green University and the Green Office of the University of Groningen.

Information: <http://www.rug.nl/about-us/who-are-we/sustainability/>; <http://www.rug.nl/about-us/who-are-we/sustainability/greenoffice/>

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