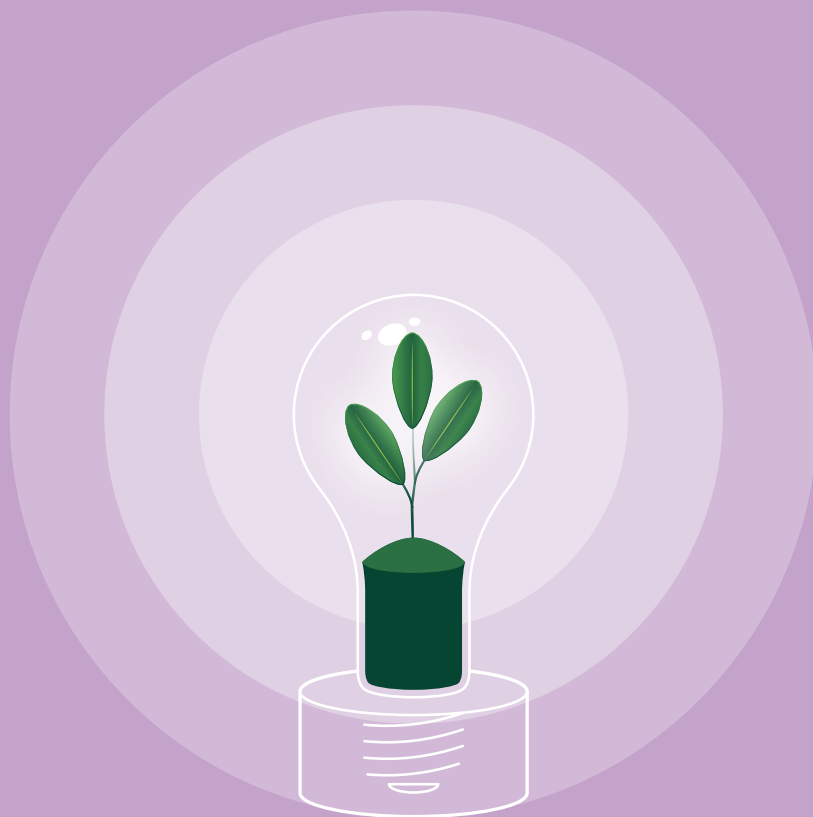


# SUSTAINABILITY AWARD



# 2020

Award-winning  
Projects

 **Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria**  
Climate Action, Environment,  
Energy, Mobility,  
Innovation and Technology

 **Federal Ministry**  
Education, Science  
and Research

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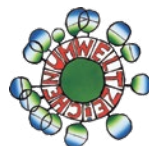
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# The Austrian Sustainability Award for Universities

## History and Background

The Austrian Sustainability Award is a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and was established in 2007 as a means of promoting and increasing awareness for sustainability processes within Austrian universities. After a starting phase of networking and communication with the relevant stakeholders, the project has been supporting pioneers in this field by organizing a nationwide “Sustainability Award” for institutions of higher education every two years, thus providing an incentive for universities, university colleges of teacher education and universities of applied sciences to work in this area. For Austria, this approach is innovative as it links a publicity related approach with an internal learning process and benchmarking. Furthermore, it was the first attempt to connect different (and separated) sustainability initiatives among various universities. The award is coordinated by Forum Umweltbildung, an agency specialising in Education for Sustainable Development.

## Characteristics

The Austrian Sustainability Award exhibits a whole-institutional approach. Thus, it is addressed to a large target group consisting of students, teachers, staff, administration and regional stakeholders. University-wide sustainability is understood as a process of participa-

tory and reflective learning characterized by several alternative routes.

It does not target individual or one-time projects, but instead recognizes long-term processes and improvements that mirror the internal learning and formation processes of the institution as a whole, concerning eight different aspects of university organisation. In each of the eight categories one project receives an Austrian Sustainability Award and there are second and third places as well. These categories are:

1. Curriculum and Instruction,
2. Research,
3. Structural Implementation,
4. Student Initiatives,
5. Administration and Management,
6. Communication and Decision-making,
7. Regional Cooperation,
8. International Cooperation.

A project can be submitted in several categories. Participation, learning and innovation are supposed to be at the very heart of each project.

An interdisciplinary jury of sustainability experts from science and research, culture and media decides on the winner in each of the eight categories. The Sustainability Award has been awarded biannually since 2008, the latest ceremony taking place in June 2018. Due to COVID-19, this year's award celebration is taking place in November 2020.



## Looking back, looking forward

Until 2007, many Austrian university initiatives for sustainable development were isolated and did not always get the necessary support from their administration. Inviting the whole university (from the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellors downwards) to take part in the award competition led to 43 applications by 13 universities in 2008 and 45 submissions by 17 universities in 2010. Due to publicity campaigns on the part of both ministries and of Forum Umweltbildung, there were approximately 80 applications from 2012 on. Over the years, more and more institutions of higher education have been participating, including various university colleges of teacher education (Pädagogische Hochschulen) and universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen), sometimes with joint applications (inter-university projects). The Austrian Sustainability Award has also attracted international attention and efforts are being made for introducing a similar award in Germany. The biennial award is planned to take place again in 2022.

The examples presented on the following pages show that sustainability has become an important topic in many Austrian universities and can be implemented in a wide variety of ways. For more information, visit the homepage (partly in English, partly in German):

[www.nachhaltige-uni.at](http://www.nachhaltige-uni.at)



**Federal Minister of Education,  
Science and Research  
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann**

 **Federal Ministry  
Education, Science  
and Research**

■ The aim of sustainable development is to find solutions for the complex challenges of our time that are both environmentally friendly and socially acceptable and to leave a world fit to live in for future generations. In 2015, the United Nations Agenda 2030 defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets for environmental, economic and socio-cultural topics essential to our global wealth and wellbeing. The complexity and diversity of issues are the major challenge for the implementation of SDGs, which demands holistic thinking, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches in teaching and research and an intensive science-society-policy dialogue in view of potential thematic controversy and conflicts in order to find sustainable solutions.

Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences have a legally mandated responsibility for education and research, a wealth of knowledge related to SDGs and play an important role for society in the implementation of SDGs. In January 2020, Universities Austria (uniko) adopted a manifesto for sustainability emphasising the responsibility of universities in teaching, research, knowledge exchange and university management. Sustainability must be truly embedded in numerous institutional activities and must be anchored in the dialogue with societal stakeholders if to be successful. Student initiatives, communication, national and international cooperation and a strong intra- and inter-institutional networking play an essential role in SDG implementation as well.

The Sustainability Award 2020 is offered to universities and universities of applied sciences for excellent and innovative pioneering projects. This year, the number of project submitters has increased significantly and

projects often are led by strong inter-institutional cooperation, which supports the impression of a higher consciousness for sustainability issues at universities and universities of applied sciences. The large number of submissions from student initiatives is impressive – last year, it has been primarily the activities from the young generation, starting from the pupils initiatives „Fridays for Future“, which sharpened the societal focus on topics such as climate change and sustainable development.

I thank all participants for their creative and innovative ideas and project submissions and wish you all the best for your future engagement for a sustainable development.

Federal Minister of Education,  
Science and Research  
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann



Photo: BKA/Andy Welzel

**Federal Minister of Climate Action,  
Environment, Energy,  
Mobility, Innovation and Technology  
Leonore Gewessler, BA**

**☐ Federal Ministry  
Republic of Austria  
Climate Action, Environment,  
Energy, Mobility,  
Innovation and Technology**

■ The climate crisis and environmental degradation are existential threats to the world, Europe and Austria. If the transition to a resource-efficient and competitive economy is to succeed, we need a new growth strategy in which no net greenhouse gas emissions are released by 2050, economic growth is decoupled from resource use and neither people nor regions are left without help. The European Green Deal is the roadmap for a sustainable EU economy and therefore also groundbreaking for Austria. As climate protection pioneers, we will make our contribution in Austria and Europe and seize climate and environmental challenges as opportunities. Moreover, we are committed to shaping the transformation of the economy and society in a fair and inclusive manner.

The European Green Deal includes an action plan to promote more efficient use of resources through the transition to a clean and circular economy, as well as to restore biodiversity and combat pollution. All economic sectors must make an active contribution by investing in new, environmentally friendly technologies, supporting industry in innovation, introducing more environmentally friendly, cheaper and healthier forms of private and public transport, decarbonising the energy sector, increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and working with international partners to improve global environmental standards.

In many of these areas, universities can make significant contributions or even take on pioneering roles through research, international and regional cooperation, but also as institutions with the management of human and material resources, through structural measures, communication and sustainable decision-making. The increasing acceptance of sustaina-

bility issues in broad areas of university teaching and student initiatives also promotes the awareness-raising that goes along with the Green Deal.

It is extremely pleasing that more than 30 percent more projects have been submitted for the 2020 award compared to 2018. The quality of this award has been ensured since the award was first established by a top-class jury from science, business and art.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the long-standing members Dr.<sup>in</sup> Gabriele Eschig (Austrian UNESCO Commission), Dr. Franz Fischler (European Forum Alpbach) and Dr. Gabriele Zuna-Kratky (Technical Museum Vienna) who have now stepped down. At the same time, I am delighted about the new jury members Monika Auer (Austrian Society for Environment and Technology), Prof. Nebojsa Nakicenovic (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis) and Mag.<sup>a</sup> Karin Skarek (Technical Museum Vienna). The many top-class submissions from the universities and the competent jury make me confident that we can successfully implement a climate and energy transition in Austria and the EU together.

**Federal Minister of Climate Action, Environment,  
Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology  
Leonore Gewessler, BA**

**1<sup>st</sup> place:**  
**Fashion & Technology,**  
 University of Art and Design Linz

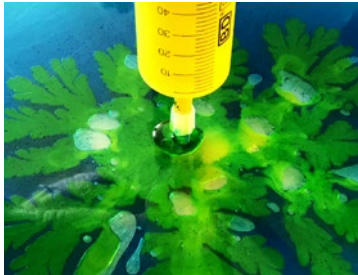


Photo: Florian Voggeneder

Fashion & Technology is a Europe-wide, unique degree program for radically sustainable innovation in fashion. Aware of the ecological, social and structural problems of the fashion industry, F & T seeks a new symbiosis of design and research through future-oriented, environmentally friendly and resource-saving processes, materials and strategies. Self-growing garments, new coloring processes using nanotechnology or microorganisms as yarn producers of the

future are just a few examples of how fashion is being reinterpreted here. The re-discovery of traditional craft and the combination with modern technologies such as biochemistry, robotics or bionics is the key to regional, environmentally conscious and humane production, coupled with respectful and sensitive strategies for the future.

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**2<sup>nd</sup> place:**  
**Lectures for Future,**  
 Inter-university project

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**3<sup>rd</sup> place:**  
**Circular Innovation Curriculum,**  
 Inter-university project

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**1<sup>st</sup> place:**  
**Zero Carbon Refurbishment,**  
 University of Applied Sciences Salzburg



Visualisierung: Avisu, © Heimat Österreich

The research project Zero Carbon Refurbishment II (ZeCaRe II) examines a carbon neutral refurbishment and redensification (period of 100 years) of a building complex built in 1985 in the Friedrich-Inhauserstraße in Salzburg, Austria. The concept includes the topics energy, CO<sub>2</sub>, mobility, social structure, economy in social housing and open space planning. The development of the plans, as well as the detailing of the building technology concept is scientifically supervised. The mobility concept includes infrastructure for bicycles, a Mobility Point with car sharing and load bicycles to borrow to compensate the reduced parking space. The building technology concept consists of a bivalent supply with drain water and exhaust air heat recovery and a covering to the peak load with pellets.

The mobility concept includes infrastructure for bicycles, a Mobility Point with car sharing and load bicycles to borrow to compensate the reduced parking space. The building technology concept consists of a bivalent supply with drain water and exhaust air heat recovery and a covering to the peak load with pellets.

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**2<sup>nd</sup> place:**  
**Circular economy,**  
 Technical University Vienna

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**3<sup>rd</sup> place:**  
**Responsible Law – Taking Responsibility in Law and Society, University Linz**

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### 1<sup>st</sup> place:

#### UniNEtZ – Options paper for the achievement of the SDGs in Austria, Inter-university project



Graphics: UniNEtZ

UniNEtZ is a 3-year project (2019-2021) initiated by the Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria (Allianz Nachhaltige Universitäten Österreich) with the aim of producing a list of consistent and integrated options for actions for the Austrian government, and to achieve co-benefits such as improved interdisciplinary cooperation within and between universities, the opening of new research fields and sustainability conscious graduates at Austrian universities. UniNEtZ is part of the work plan and budget agreements between universi-

ties and the ministry in the period 2019-2021. Currently, diverse groups work on options of how to achieve the SDGs in an Austrian context.

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### 2<sup>nd</sup> place:

#### Specialisation “brave & fair” within the Bachelor’s programme Primary Education, University College of Teacher Education Styria

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> place:

#### Network ECOLOG – ECOLOGisation of Schools – Education for Sustainability, Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt

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### 1<sup>st</sup> place:

#### 1..2..3.. Cup with you?, University of Applied Sciences Vorarlberg



Graphics: Fachhochschule Vorarlberg

In Austria, about 30,000 coffee-cups per hour are disposed. In the „Sustainability Innovation Class“ a vending machine manufacturer was convinced to programme a discount when a re-usable cup is placed under the machine. Various options for multi-usage-cups were evaluated, branded and offered for sale for a donation. Special attention was given to the communication design: with actions in front of and at the machines, it was possible to reach almost all coffee drinkers in just one week and to inform them about the options of switching to a re-usable cup. The disposable cup consumption could thus be significantly reduced. Any company that

offers hot drinks from vending machines now can easily implement the action „1..2..3 cup?“ by themselves.

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#### Green Student Challenge, University of Salzburg

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> place:

#### EcoMap – Discover sustainable spots around you, Vienna University of Economics and Business

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### 1<sup>st</sup> place: WNWmed-NOST, Medical University of Vienna



Collage: WNW Med NOST

The project WNWmed-NOST was initiated by the Association of Women Scientists for Medicine (WNWmed) in 2017. It supports applicants for validation of a foreign university degree at the Medical University of Vienna and enables them to connect with each other and with Austrian peers. WNWmed-NOST offers informative meetings and networking events, organization of learning groups, as well as support in the implementation of observerships or “Famulaturen” at the University Hospital (AKH). The aim is to increase the efficiency of the validation process and to integrate foreign physicians in the medical profession and thus within Austrian society. Well integrated physicians are not only a valuable resource for the medical profession, they can also contribute significantly to the development of our society.

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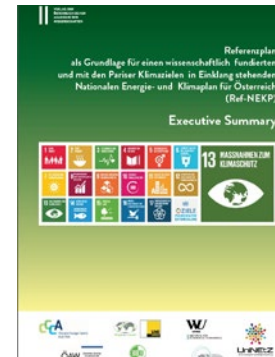
### 2<sup>nd</sup> place: MED CAMPUS Module 1, Medical University Graz

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Nature Conservation Operator, Carinthia University of Applied Sciences

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### 1<sup>st</sup> place Reference plan as basis for a scientifically grounded National Energy and Climate Plan for Austria that is in line with the Paris Climate Agreement (Ref-NECP), Inter-university project



Graphics: G. Kirchengast et al.

The reference plan as basis for a scientifically grounded National Energy and Climate Plan for Austria that is in line with the Paris Climate Agreement (Ref-NECP) was initiated by a cooperation of the University of Graz, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna (BOKU) and Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) to support the preparation of the official NECP. It was also used to assess climate plans of parties and informed the coalition talks 2019 to implement a climate and energy plan that puts Austria on track regarding the achievement of the Paris climate goal. On the basis of a compilation of mitigation options the Ref-NECP identifies a bundle of essential measures deemed crucial for achieving the 1,5 Celsius target. Possible mitigation pathways are developed based on different value judgments. The Ref-NECP reflects state-of-the-art knowledge and thus hopefully contributes to a climate-just future.

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### 2<sup>nd</sup> place: Fridays Forum, University of Applied Arts Vienna

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Green Mobility Design Thinking Challenge, University of Graz

■ **Contact:** Mag. Ralph Zettl, Magdalena Rusch BA, nachhaltigkeitstag@uni-graz.at



## REGIONAL COOPERATION

### 1<sup>st</sup> place: Caravan for a Sustainable Future, Inter-university project



Graphics: Oikodrom

The project “Caravan for a Sustainable Future” fosters dialogue on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) between science, politics and society in rural Austria. In a cooperation of three universities and master programs (International Development, Social Ecology and Applied Arts) an innovative teaching format was created that links arts and science to local realities of small Austrian towns and villages. In an interdisciplinary exchange the students developed participatory project ideas for discussing the SDGs with local inhabitants. As part of the “Caravan for a Sustainable Future” they continued their work in five towns and villages in Lower Austria and Styria until autumn 2019, using participatory methods including film, artistic interventions and interactive settings.

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### 2<sup>nd</sup> place: BiNE Tyrol: Strategy and Network, Inter-university project

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Smart City Hallein, University of Applied Sciences Salzburg

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## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

### 1<sup>st</sup> place: Sustainability Adventure – Become a SDG Reporter!, Inter-university project



Photo: Forum für nachhaltige Visionen in Aktion

In the Sustainability Adventure gap-year & sabbatical travelers volunteer to become SDG reporters. During their extraordinary and low carbon journey they use storytelling to help spread the word about inspiring SDG solutions to global environmental and social challenges they encounter. Via social media, this is continuously shared and discussed with partner school-classes back home. Thereby they not only facilitate perspective change and mind shifts, but also encourage action & behaviour change with powerful catalyzers and multipliers for future change.

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### 2<sup>nd</sup> place: Global Sustainability Learning, University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy

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### 3<sup>rd</sup> place: Young Scientist Energy Award (YSEA), University of Applied Sciences Kufstein

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