

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

2022

Award-winning
Projects



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

 **Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria**
Education, Science
and Research

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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 biannual “Sustainability Award” for higher education institutions, thus providing an incentive for institutions of higher education to work in this area. For Austria, this approach was 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

participatory 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 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. Curricula 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 2020 under severe COVID-19 regulations. The current award ceremony is taking place in June 2022.



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. The biannual award is planned to take place again in 2024.

The examples presented on the following pages show that sustainability has become an important topic in many Austrian universities and contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For more information, visit the homepage (partly in English, partly in German):

www.nachhaltige-uni.at



Federal Minister of Education,
Science and Research
Ao. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Martin Polaschek

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Education, Science
and Research

■ Austria's universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education are committed to a comprehensive approach of sustainability according to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) formulated in the UN 2030 Agenda. Within their legally mandated responsibilities, they make significant contributions to their implementation.

They offer future-oriented teaching and provide their students with the necessary knowledge and skills to make responsible decisions in later (professional) life for the benefit of society and the natural environment. As part of their research activities, they address issues which are essential for a liveable future for generations to come, covering the entire environmental, economic and socio-cultural topics addressed in the SDGs. The research results and scientific expertise gained facilitate economic and technological innovations as well as societal progress and serve as evidence for decision-making processes. The UniNETZ Options Report published in spring 2022 is a prime example of this. In addition, institutional and structural steps at higher education institutions in the area of sustainability gain increasing importance. Initiatives include a wide range of measures in the areas of energy and resource efficiency, sustainable building infrastructure and the creation of a healthy working and learning environment for all higher education institution members.

The 83 projects submitted for the Sustainability Award 2022 reflect the wealth and quality of higher education institutions' activities in the area of sustainability. They illustrate the excellence of higher education as well as the creativity and innovative power of students, teachers and researchers. The high number of cross-university projects illustrates that complex

challenges must be addressed on an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional basis and that the higher education institutions are part of excellent national and international networks.

Biannually, the Sustainability Award provides an opportunity to recognize the commitment and performance of Austria's higher education institutions and to give the projects the visibility and recognition they deserve. With this in mind, I wish to thank all participants for their great contributions and would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to this year's award winners! Your efforts help shaping a sustainable future for our higher education institutions and our society!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin Polaschek". The signature is fluid and cursive.



Photo: © BMK/Cajetan Parwein

**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**

■ Even if the pandemic and geopolitical conflict currently present considerable challenges to our society, we must keep a firm eye on the two greatest crises of our time: the climate and biodiversity crises. More than ever, forward-looking, cooperative and socially responsible action based on scientifically sound facts is required. The Sustainability Award 2022 is part of the necessary effort to address these crises decisively. The severe weather events of the 2021 summer, the fires in Lower Austria in the following fall and the terrible drought in spring 2022 have shown us that the effects of the climate crisis directly affect our country. The consequences are high costs, threatened livelihoods, endangered jobs and degraded natural habitats. Sustainable development, climate and species protection are thus of paramount importance to protect ourselves from the effects of these threatening developments. What it requires is a large-scale change in awareness. A change in awareness that is inter alia taking place within universities and colleges.

In the global process of sustainable development, colleges and universities are of great importance. Every day, they make essential contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and have an impact far beyond SDG 4 “quality education”. As integrative educational institutions for future generations and as drivers of scientific knowledge, Austrian universities and colleges are among those that enable us to deal with the complexity of current crises. They provide us with the necessary knowledge to classify them and subsequently to identify possible courses of action. The wide range and high quality of the projects submitted for the Sustainability Award 2022 is an expression of this creative power. They actively enable a more sustainable future. Each of

the projects contributes to ecological, economic, social, cultural or political aspects of sustainability in its field of activity and thereby demonstrates their potential for change.

The high-profile jury of the award is further proof that sustainable development and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have become established in the Austrian tertiary sector. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the jury: Monika Auer (Austrian Society for Environment and Technology), Mag.^a Bettina Leidl (Kunst Haus Wien and MuseumsQuartier Wien), Prof. Gerd Michelsen (Leuphana University Lüneburg), Mag.^a Karin Skarek, MBA (Technical Museum Vienna) Dr. Klaus Taschwer (Newspaper “Der Standard”) and Dr. Eric Veulliet (President of the Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences). What is special about the Sustainability Awards is that the jury not only honors projects with transformational potential, but that through the award, colleges and universities also demonstrate how they themselves live their institutional responsibility for social and environmentally sound development. In view of the complexity of the climate crisis, this spectrum of initiatives is needed. Thank you all very much for your commitment and efforts.

1st place:

Teacher Training for SDGs – a transdisciplinary approach I

University College of Teacher Education Vienna



© PH Wien

Austria's Teacher University Colleges are not only educating teachers, they are also in charge of providing teacher training. For the Teacher University College this is a field of action which is as big as the bachelor and master programmes. The project "100 training lessons for the SDGs" has the target to educate teachers of all different school types on a high-quality level for teaching the SDGs from different points of view. Just to provide a small insight: Activists from Fridays for Future explained teachers how to work project oriented about the climate crisis. Activists from Teachers for Future discussed the school as a place of activism. Elementary and primary teachers explored the connection between nature experience and sustainability in Vienna's public parks.

Contact: Mag. Dr. Evelyn Süß-Stepancik, evelyn.suess-stepancik@phwien.ac.at

2nd place:

Environmental engineering curriculum at TU Wien I Technical University Vienna

Contact: Dr. techn. Heidemarie Schaar, heidemarie.schaar@tuwien.ac.at

3rd place:

Innovative study programmes with a focus on sustainable building materials and social responsibility I University of Art and Design Linz

Contact: Ulrike Schwantner, DI, ulrike.schwantner@ufg.at

1st place:

REEGain – Sustainable biological recycling of environmentally harmful substances (Rare Earth Elements) from electronic waste and sewage I IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems



© Dominik Schild

Rare earths are raw materials that are used in small quantities in electrical devices but are gaining importance due to the increasing total number of such devices. The current recycling rate of these elements is very low, so the aim of this project is to find an environmentally friendly and sustainable method of recovery. The Institute for Microbiology of the Czech Academy of Science, the Krems University for Continuing Education, the Karl Landsteiner University and the IMC University of Applied Sciences Krems have teamed up to recover rare earths from electronic waste with the help of microorganisms. Typical electronic scrap is added in microorganism fermentations and enriched by these organisms in and on the individual cells. The rare earths can then be recycled from this biomass.

Typical electronic scrap is added in microorganism fermentations and enriched by these organisms in and on the individual cells. The rare earths can then be recycled from this biomass.

Contact: Dominik Schild, dominik.schild@fh-krems.ac.at

2nd place:

Production of sustainable bio-plastics I Inter-university project

Contact: Mag. Alexander Zwirzitz, PhD., alexander.zwirzitz@fh-wels.at

3rd place:

PhotoSomes I Technical University Vienna

Contact: Dr. Sabine Kubicek, sabine.kubicek@tuwien.ac.at

STRUCTURAL IMPLEMENTATION

1st place:

Climate@MaxPerutzLabs: From the molecule to the climate – sustainability in molecular biological research I Inter-university project



© Max Perutz Labs

Biomedical research has a huge impact on medicine and our understanding of biological processes and demonstrated the link between climate change and human activities. But the research itself produces around 2% of all plastic waste and uses 10–15 times more energy than the average workplace. Climate@

MaxPerutzLabs is a grassroots organization at the Max Perutz Labs (University and the Medical University of Vienna) to make research more sustainable. We love to do science but as teachers and researchers we cannot continue our research by destroying the environment around us. Our project has three goals: 1) calculate the carbon footprint, 2) inform employees about the impact of research on climate change and show best practice solutions and 3) set actions to reduce our waste and CO₂ footprint.

Contact: Dr. Jeroen Dobbelaere, climate.group@maxperutzlabs.ac.at

2nd place:

The implementation of sustainability measures I
University of Applied Sciences, BFI Vienna

Contact: DI Judith Brücker, judith.bruecker@fh-vie.ac.at

3rd place:

Sustainable Higher Education Institutions – Understanding and Managing Impacts I
Vienna University of Economics and Business

Contact: ao. Prof. Dr. André Martinuzzi; Florian Findler, PhD,
andre.martinuzzi@wu.ac.at, florian.findler@wu.ac.at

STUDENT INITIATIVES

1st place:

shiftTanks I
Inter-university project



shiftTanks is the first initiative in Austria that offers students of technical fields the possibility of interdisciplinary engagement regarding environmental issues. The organization consists of five thinktanks: „Awareness“, „Global South“, „Resources“, „Energy“ and „Processes“. The tanks are managed

by students and young graduates of technical studies. Within only a few months, shift-Tanks has grown to be the largest voluntary sustainability initiative for students in Styria and the largest pertinent voluntary technical engagement for students regarding sustainability in Austria. The initiative's long-term goal is to raise awareness of future engineers regarding climate and environmental concerns and to offer technical expertise in the process of finding solutions.

Contact: Kerrin Witt, kerrin.witt@shifftanks.at

2nd place:

Hybrid mobile and digital education and advisory settings I University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy

Contact: Prof. Ing. Elfriede Berger, MA BEd, elfriede.berger@haup.ac.at

3rd place:

Generation Z Preferences within travel decisions I
MCI Management Center Innsbruck

Contact: Gregor Wechner, gregor.wechner@gmail.com

1st place:

Green Office – Student Office for Sustainability I
University of Innsbruck



Green Office – Student
Office for Sustainability

The student-led Green Office of the University of Innsbruck is the first one following the concept of the international Green Office Movement. The concept has been developed by students during a taught course and presented to University leadership. The concept is commonly supported by the elected student representatives as well as by the Fridays for Future movement and the

grassroots Initiative for a Sustainable University of Innsbruck. The University of Innsbruck provides a room and other infrastructure as well as a budget of € 40.000 per year for the next years. This made it possible to hire four student assistants who are now coordinating the activities of the Green Office.

Contact: Daniel Immer, green-office@uibk.ac.at

2nd place:

Zero Carbon TU Graz 2030 I
Graz University of Technology

Contact: Ass.Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Dr.phil. Günter Getzinger, getzinger@tugraz.at

3rd place:

Climate-friendly travel policy I
University of Innsbruck

Contact: Lorenzo Rieg, lorenzo.rieg@uibk.ac.at

1st place:

Innovation Matters. Interdisciplinary Knowledge Exchange for Societal Challenges: Networks, Methods, Transfer I Inter-university project



Innovation Matters is a transdisciplinary cooperation project of nine Viennese and Lower Austrian universities. The aim of this project is to test new measures and offers to facilitate the exchange between science, business and society.

The active transfer of research results and university know-how into practice and the uptake of new questions from business and society by science are of central importance in contributing to the solution of current societal challenges. In close cooperation with partners from business and society, appropriate support formats for the entire research process were developed: from networking formats for the initial phase of research projects to open science method workshops to new, innovative forms of exploitation of the research output.

Contact: Mag.^a Angelika Zelisko, angelika.zelisko@uni-ak.ac.at

2nd place:

Optimizing the potential for new social supermarkets in Austria I
Inter-university project,

Contact: FH-Prof. Dr. Eva Lienbacher, eva.lienbacher@fh-salzburg.ac.at

3rd place:

Sustainability & Climate Change I
Inter-university project

Contact: Christina Raab, Christina.Raab@uibk.ac.at

REGIONAL COOPERATION

1st place:

MoreGreenSchools I Technical University Vienna



© TU Wien

Based on numerous green projects where students research together with TU Wien, BOKU and companies on topics such as greening, energy and resource efficiency, climate change etc. and awareness for

a sustainable development of the future is raised, the project MoreGreenSchools develops financing models for school greening for the first time. The life cycle costs of greening systems and easily implementable low-cost systems will be developed and exemplarily implemented at one to two schools per region. We are already focusing on interdisciplinary and forward-thinking education by actively integrating students from the HTL Bautechnikum and the HBLFA Gartenbau as well as another nine schools.

Contact: Univ. Prof. DI. Dr. Azra Korjenic, azra.korjenic@tuwien.ac.at

2nd place:

Coop Sustainable Universities I Inter-university project

Contact: FH-Prof. Mag. Dr. Elisabeth Steiner, elisabeth.steiner@fh-campuswien.ac.at

3rd place:

Biogas2H2 - On-site biogas utilization for decentralized hydrogen production I Graz University of Technology

Contact: Prof. Viktor Hacker, DI Bernd Stoppacher, Dr. Sebastian Bock, viktor.hacker@tugraz.at, bernd.stoppacher@tugraz.at, Sebastian.bock@tugraz.at

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

1st place:

The European University Alliance on Responsible Consumption and Production (EURECA-PRO) I Inter-university project



EURECA-PRO aims to become a global educational hub and research and innovation leader in qualitative environmental and social framework development for SDG 12 by 2040. Staff and future graduates will have sustainable, interdisciplinary, intercultural & systemic thinking engrained in their way of operation, fostering a prosperous societal development and a healthy economy while at the same time protecting the environment. The EUA contributes to change European Higher Education to a more inclusive, borderless system which not only enables academic freedom, free mobility, civic engagement, equal participation & transparent joint governance but allows for the development of shared fundamental philosophies, common values and solution-oriented approaches as well as responsible systems design.

development of shared fundamental philosophies, common values and solution-oriented approaches as well as responsible systems design.

Contact: Lisa Pichler, lisa.pichler@unileoben.ac.at

2nd place:

MaGICLandscapes - Managing Green Infrastructure in Central European Landscapes I University of Vienna

Contact: Ass.-Prof. Dr. Thomas Wrba, Florian Danzinger, MSc, thomas.wrba@univie.ac.at, florian.danzinger@univie.ac.at

3rd place:

School Garden goes Europe I University College of Teacher Education Vorarlberg

Contact: HS-Prof. Mag. Dr. Stefan Jarau, stefan.jarau@ph-vorarlberg.ac.at