



**BEST PRACTICES TO EMPOWER STAFF AND STUDENTS  
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MATTERS AT HIGHER  
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

**INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT 4**

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# INTRODUCTION

Climate change, biodiversity loss, severe social inequalities, deterioration of general living conditions, intensive use of resources are underway<sup>1</sup> and, according to many, a consequence of human activities<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, these processes go much faster than predicted<sup>3</sup>, threatening the collapse of key social and economic systems (United Nations, 2019).

Unprecedented efforts to transform societies, economies, infrastructures and governance institutions call for interdisciplinary solutions capable of promoting change and innovation into the institutional Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) strategies. Within this context, the term “Education for Sustainable Development” (ESD) describes the educational efforts aimed at empowering people to change the way they think and work so as to create a sustainable future society (Hoffman, 2018; UNESCO, 2017).

There is a broad consensus on the key role that sustainability education may play at all levels of education, from kindergarten to university. However, such a remark is even more valid for universities as multi-stakeholders which are responsible for contributing to the SDGs.

Firstly, higher education provides future thinkers, decision-makers and teachers with broad and well-grounded knowledge and leadership skills motivating people to get a deeper understanding of the world. Secondly, higher education is an important basis for sustainability research; cutting-edge procedures may facilitate the transition to a more sustainable future. Thirdly, higher education institutions’ (HEIs) operations mediate, set examples or transform certain behavioural patterns into a norm, thus fulfilling the wider social role of these institutions. Being the place where future leaders and citizens develop their professional and civic skills to support social and economic development, HEIs should pave the way towards the effective communication, promotion, and implementation of sustainable solutions to environmental issues (Leal Filho, 2000).

## ABOUT UNI-ECO

The UNI-ECO project came as a response to these pressing issues. The UNI-ECO project ran between 1 October 2019 and 31 August 2022. This Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project was a collaboration between Universitat de Barcelona (UB), Utrecht University (UU), Trinity College Dublin, Université de Montpellier (UM), Eötvös Loránd University/Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem (ELTE) and two non-profit institutions, CESIE and Unione delle Università del Mediterraneo (UNIMED).

The aim of the UNI-ECO project was to promote the adoption of green practices and

make sustainability more visible and actionable on campus. We chose a bottom-up approach involving all university layers and all the social groups within partner institutions. We set out to develop an innovative methodology that can empower the HEI community to actively support the strategic plan of each institution.

## **ABOUT THIS ROADMAP**

The participating HEIs have carried out several projects on sustainability on campus, both before and during the UNI-ECO project. In this document, we have selected two or three best practices from the individual HEIs. These best practices have made a positive impact on sustainability at our respective campuses and we believe they can inspire other HEIs. For every best practice, we give a concise overview of the context, goals, process, lessons learned and impact. With these best practices, we want to empower the HEI community to act on sustainable development related matters. We hope the best practices will be the stepping stone for many sustainable campuses to follow in the future, so we can positively contribute to the unprecedented, pressing environmental issues of our time.

<sup>1</sup>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC) (2019). *Special Report: Global Warming of 1.5 °C*. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/>

<sup>2</sup>National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) (2020). *Scientific Consensus: Earth's Climate Is Warming*. Available at: <https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>

<sup>3</sup>Copernicus Climate Change Service (2020). *Copernicus: 2020 warmest year on record for Europe; globally, 2020 ties with 2016 for warmest year recorded*. Press release, Reading, 8 January 2021. Available at: <https://climate.copernicus.eu/2020-warmest-year-record-europe-globally-2020-ties-2016-warmest-year-recorded>

# BEST PRACTICE: THE ECO-GUIDE BOOK

## UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Polyearth is a student association of the Polytech Engineering School of the University of Montpellier focusing on sustainability issues. On a regular basis, they conduct surveys on social media to identify priority issues they need to tackle to address the needs of the university community when it comes to sustainability.

In September 2017, they launched a survey that clearly highlighted a trend of more and more students trying to adopt more eco-friendly behaviours and to get more involved in the local sustainability ecosystem. However, a lot of them testified that they were sharing the same struggles to find relevant information, for two specific reasons:

- Scattered information: they need a unique source of information gathering everything in one place.
- Lack of time: they need “quick and easy wins”, tips on little things they can do on a daily basis to be more sustainable without it being too time consuming. It is also hard to commit to the research of information while studying and sometimes having a part-time job. A document supporting a sustainable approach could help.

After analysing the results of the survey, Polyearth decided to work on an eco-guide, a single document gathering all the useful information on what students could do in terms of sustainability at different levels depending on the type of commitment they are looking for. For example, tips on what to do at home to reduce your carbon footprint (energy efficiency, food and water waste, recycling, creating your own domestic products, etc.), sustainable mobility options in the city, how and where to shop sustainable (local and organic products, cooperative shops, second-hand shops, etc.).

This format would provide a unique solution addressing both issues raised by the survey, while still giving students that would want to go further in the process the option to do so. Whether students are just trying to adopt simple daily gestures and habits, or to get actively involved, the eco-guide would allow everyone to contribute to sustainable development in their own way. The document also serves as a way to

show people that you can contribute in many and easy ways in order to bring new people on board of the sustainability train.

The guide is mostly targeting a student population, with a focus on the Montpellier area, but actually has a huge replication potential, with the possibility to be used by non-students, and also to be adjusted in the context of other cities. The creation of the guide started in September 2017 and ended in June 2018 with the publication and distribution of the finished product.

## 2. PROCESS

Polyearth was the leading institution for the implementation of this best practice from start to finish. They initiated it by launching the survey. Students were also actors in some way as they identified the issue that led to the creation of the eco-guide, and were also consulted on a regular basis during the development of the document. The guide required an important collaboration at the local level and the contribution of a wide range of local actors.

From political actors, with the city of Montpellier and the Occitania Region, to NGOs and associations (ADEME – Agency for the environment and energy efficiency), local businesses, local newspapers (La Gazette), and more, in order to provide information for the guide, help with the dissemination and communication to ensure a large impact, to advise relevant stakeholders to contact at the national level, etc. With the guide being very ambitious, the support and contribution of the local actors committed to sustainability and providing their input and expertise was definitely required to achieve the production of the guide on time.

On a larger scale, national actors were contacted to provide useful information for the guide (Observatory of the Electrical Industry, Ecosia, Les Amis de la Terre, etc.). Polyearth also contacted actors and associations who engaged in a similar process to get their insight and see how they could go further (Association Campus Vert Strasbourg, Association Les Jeunes Consom'acteurs Bordeaux, etc.).

In terms of implementation, it all started with the identification of what should be included in the guide. For that, multiple surveys were conducted and an important work of benchmarking and analysis of existing guides was accomplished. This also served to include additional sections to the guide compared to what was originally foreseen (see previous section). Among others, they added sections on entertainment (restaurants and cafes, conferences and debates, alternative cinemas and cultural activities, etc.), on information (socially concerned newspapers and medias), on how to get involved with various associations, NGOs and networks. They also included a small guide on existing labels, as well as a section on seasonal

consuming with a calendar list of fruits and vegetables, and an agenda of sustainable events, fairs, markets, and more.

After figuring out the required content, it was time to go find the information, with homemade research and stakeholders solicitation and interviews, similarly to a reporting job. This first two steps took several months, and only with a proper structure of the guide established and a good amount of information and sources collected started the writing. The last production step was the design of the guide, while the very last step of the process was communication and dissemination, which also required the support and contribution of many stakeholders.

### 3. OUTCOME

After almost a year, Polyearth finalised a 70-page version of the guide, available online and also as a A4 booklet printed on recycled paper. It was printed in 1850 copies and distributed in over 20 institutions in the Montpellier area. The guide now serves as a reference and is frequently distributed during events beyond the university, by NGOs and other institutions.

While the guide proved to be a very complete and comprehensive resource, it was decided to produce a shorter version meant as a portable tool and a preview to the full version, with the focus being on sustainability tips and a selection of venues and shops.

Although it is hard to measure the actual impact of the guide in terms of numbers of new commitments to sustainability and changes of behaviours, a survey was conducted in early 2020 to try to evaluate its usefulness. Just over 90% of respondents shared that the guide was a valuable resource and a huge time saver for them when looking for a specific information. 81% shared that it resulted in them adopting new daily gestures. 84% mentioned that it helped them make their first step towards a more sustainable behaviour. While these numbers must be understood in a context where most of the respondents (95%) were initially interested by the guide before it was published, they are still a very positive sign.

Several lessons were also learned during the production process. First, the work it represents was largely underestimated, and put on hold certain activities of the association in order to finalise the guide. It definitely requires a committed team over a long period of time and also all the help you can get from a committed local environment. The guide as it was thought and designed will probably require updates on a regular basis as the state of sustainability is evolving at a fast pace, and if some section will only slightly need to be amended, some of them would need to be completely updated every year, which needs to be taken into account by the institution in charge. While the replication potential is huge, the guide also needs to

be considered in the context of the city it is focusing on. The more the local situation is sustainability oriented, the more content it will include, and the easier it will be to find help and support from local actors, which is definitely required in order for it to be successful and largely disseminated.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Polyearth eco-guide proved to be useful and impactful according to the numbers. It is a fine-tuned and tailor-made document addressing relevant issues of its time and specific issues raised by its targeted users. This best practice also perfectly illustrates the kind of action UNI-ECO is trying to foster, and the kind of action we believe can be successful and sustainable over a long period of time. These actions follow the three UNI-ECO pillars that the Eco-guide embodies to perfection: raise awareness, cooperate (community building and engagement), and contribute (call to action).

#### 5. LEARN MORE

- Read the full version of the eco-guide [here](#).
- Have a look at the [Polyearth Facebook page](#).

# BEST PRACTICE: INVENTAIRE FAC

## UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTPELLIER

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Inventaire Fac initiative started as an activity of the GNUM association (Naturalist Group) of the University of Montpellier in 2011. It came from the will of one of its co-founders, then biology teacher and researcher at the University of Montpellier, to see biodiversity have a bigger weight in the decision-making and environmental policies of universities, but also from the initiative of a small group of biology students of the University of Montpellier. These students identified that their courses included a lot of repository work of fauna and flora in different locations, but that this work had never been done on the campus itself.

These actors also identified that with the state of sustainability at the time, there was an urgent need of raising awareness and encouraging to action at the individual level when it comes to biodiversity in order to face modern challenges. Inventaire Fac was created with this idea in mind and with three main objectives:

1. Raising awareness about urban biodiversity.
2. Develop skills and knowledge in ecology about urban fauna and flora.
3. Make students actors of the environmental governance and policies of their campus.

It first started with observations sessions on the campus to identify and list in a repository the different species on the campus of the Faculty of Sciences. It was originally a very small group (about 5 people in each session) with no scientific protocol in place. The initiative progressively expanded its reach between 2011 and 2013 through word of mouth, first with a science-oriented audience, and then with people from various backgrounds. With 60 active members in 2013 and more than 400 species listed the initiative went to another level with the production of a scientific mediation book called “Le Petit Guide naturaliste de la faculté des sciences de Montpellier”. More than 1000 copies were sold for the price of 2€.

This success led to more on more people getting involved in the bi-monthly observation sessions, students and staff. They also started to list species of other campuses of the University. With other universities reaching out to GNUM to learn about Inventaire Fac, they worked with several partners on a digital solution for the inventory, taking the form of a smartphone app called BiodiverCity. Inventaire Fac

has now been developed at four other universities or schools: University of Toulouse, University of Lyon, University of Bourgogne and Sup Biotech Paris.

## 2. PROCESS

Initially carried out by GNUM, a student association of the university of Montpellier, and supported by a few teachers, more and more students and staff (administrative and teaching) got involved. The success of the initiative led them to get involved with other associations, labs and networks (French Network of Students for Sustainability REFEDD, Neocampus, IRIT, EcoLab, etc.) to get support and move towards a digital solution.

With community participation being at the heart of Inventaire Fac, the first step of the project consisted in a state of the art of participative science in the country. After that, French participative science programs (Vigie-nature, Tela Botanica, etc.) were contacted to provide their insight and contribute to the development of Inventaire Fac. The programs developed by these initiatives were a great inspiration and model for the design of the project.

If the format of the repository evolved over time, it is also the case of the process behind it. The scientific approach, not existing at the beginning, took form month after month, with the creation of a scientific committee in charge of analysing the data collected by participants and of validating information and pictures shared on the app. A protocol for the observation sessions was also established. Other student associations are also now very active and organising their own observation sessions to complete to work of GNUM.

Over time, with the workload being hard to sustain, the validation model switched to a Wikipedia-like, community system. The project also required an important development in terms of human resources with two people being hired especially for Inventaire Fac to work on the organisation of the sessions, manage the community and develop the initiative on a larger scale.

## 3. OUTCOME

No specific surveys were conducted to measure the impact of the initiative. However, we can measure its success through several indicators:

1. Several universities now have an operational tool allowing the monitor the evolution of the biodiversity on campus. It directly results in the university management being able to make decision based on data.
2. Participants in the initiative have shared multiple times how it allowed them to gain skills and knowledge, in terms of biodiversity, but also in project management, community building and teamwork. It directly addresses

objective 2 of the project, and potentially make the participants of Inventaire Fac actors of change in their future structures.

3. The exponential growth of the project with basically no communication demonstrates an important progress in terms of raising awareness about biodiversity issues.
4. It created a strong community and made students actors of sustainability on campus, addressing directly objective 3.
5. The replication of the initiative at other universities is also an indicator of success.

However, it is important to note that a project like Inventaire Fac comes with a lot of challenges. First, the lack of funding, as the project mostly lives on a small amount of money provided by local structures. Being able to reach larger organisms to ensure the financial sustainability of the initiative will be key in the future and would allow to have the appropriate human resources to bring the project to the next level and allow the replication at the national level at a much faster pace.

The scientific approach is also to be developed. Inventaire Fac has yet to find a sustainable a system allowing both community participation and scientific expertise. This would provide and ensure more reliable data and allow a massive gain of reputation and credibility that might be the key to unlock the next level.

Finally, generating student participation is hard. It took two years for Inventaire Fac to go from 5 active participants to 60. And if the project was lucky enough to generate a great word to mouth after that and enjoyed a fast and exponential growth, it will not always be the case. Having a well thought engaging strategy before starting the project would save a lot of time.

The success of the project will also rely on the contribution of a wide range of actors. Since it will require skills in many areas, and also some kind of support (financial, communication, expertise, etc.), the involvement of teachers, associations and local actors, starting with the University itself, will be very important.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Inventaire Fac is a true student initiative success story. Starting as an Excel spreadsheet managed by a tiny group of people, the project went through different steps (book, digital tool, expansion to other Montpellier campuses, replication in other universities) and demonstrated a great capacity to adjust over time in order to let it grow. It is also a perfect example of a successful initiative based on the three UNI-ECO pillars: raise awareness, cooperate and contribute. It perfectly demonstrates one of the main findings of the UNI-ECO project: campus users are the drivers of change when it comes to sustainability on campus, and any projects trying

to be successful should have that in mind and be based on some kind of call to action and collaborative aspect.

## 5. LEARN MORE

- Check out the [Inventaire Fac website](#).
- Download the “[Petit guide naturaliste](#)”.
- Download the [BiodiverCity App](#).
- Read more about the [history of Inventaire Fac](#), written by its founder.

# BEST PRACTICE: GREEN CHALLENGES

## UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Many Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) have ambitions to make their campuses, and the day-to-day operations within their campuses, more sustainable. These efforts are mainly initiated top-down. With the [UNI-ECO project](#), and the green challenges in particular, we aim for a bottom-up approach: we want to invite all campus users - students, teachers/researchers, administrative staff - to co-create a sustainable campus.

A “green challenge” is a challenge issued by a HEI to campus users to develop a small project that makes their campus more sustainable. We believe that staff and students will bring these ideas to life by taking action. A green challenge always works towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The five HEIs participating in the UNI-ECO project - the University of Montpellier, the University of Barcelona, the University of Utrecht, the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest and Trinity College Dublin - all put out two open calls for green challenges in the course of the UNI-ECO project (1 October 2019 – 1 August 2022). The first round of open calls ran from 15 March to 4 April 2021, the second round ran from 1 December 2021 – 2 January 2022. The implementation of the green challenge projects is still ongoing at all HEI's at the moment that this document was written (June 2022).

### 2. PROCESS

First, we conducted a survey to identify relevant areas to address. We have collected the results in the [State of the Art on Sustainable Development in Higher Education Institutions](#) report, which was conducted in the first phase of the UNI-ECO project among staff and students. Four priority areas for action were identified. These priority areas were:

1. Practices that will bring the university closer to a zero waste goal.
2. Reducing the carbon footprint related to transport at the university.
3. Actions to support and enhance biodiversity on campus.
4. Reducing the environmental footprint of catering at the university.

For a green challenge to be implemented, operational staff has to be on board at an early stage. Therefore, at all HEIs, outreach to operational staff was key. For example, at Utrecht University, the caterer, zero waste manager and the project leaders of biodiversity and mobility, were approached prior to the open calls, to make sure we could count on their cooperation later on.

The implementation process of the green challenges went as follows:

1. The selection criteria, application procedure, evaluation procedures and obligations of the selected applicants were defined by the project partners. Each university had the possibility to decide to fund the selected projects.
2. Each partner university managed its own internal calls for green challenge projects. This involved internal communication, implementation, guidance, evaluation and follow-up of the projects. Campus users could only apply with a team (2 – 5 people). It was also possible for campus users to join an existing team.
3. Through a communication campaign, campus users were invited to propose their project ideas by filling out an application form during the open calls. Social media, institutional websites, newsletters, in-class presentations, presentations during local university were utilized. Both open calls ran for a month.
4. A selection committee was assigned at each university to rate the feasibility, coherence, quality and originality of the projects. The selection committees consisted of staff with different backgrounds, among them sustainability experts, teachers, people in charge of real estate on campus and higher management. For example: people in charge of real estate could evaluate the feasibility of projects requesting to touch on a building on campus. Management could say if the project was relevant according to the priorities of the university.
5. Each partner university selected a maximum of five projects per call, based on the predefined criteria. Predefined criteria were amongst others: analysis of needs, realistic objectives, measurable results, quality of the organisation and potential for replicability.
6. The selected teams had access to a dedicated online space, the “Living Lab”. The Living Lab works as a “digital incubator”, where teams can exchange together, support each other to overcome challenges and obstacles and create connections between projects. It also serves as a social feed allowing teams to share their progress in terms of the implementation of the project. It was also an interface for them to get assistance and guidance from experts.
7. If selected, the teams received support from the local university staff and regular monitoring from the local UNI-ECO team in order to successfully implement their project.

8. Each team submitted a progress report, based on a template created by the UNI-ECO team.
9. The deadline for sending the progress report to the selection (/evaluation) committee was determined locally.

### 3. OUTCOME

The green challenges turned out to be an effective and accessible way to involve campus users with sustainability. In total, exactly 100 project ideas were submitted at the five HEIs during the two open calls. Even more important, at all HEIs the green challenges made a valuable contribution to (1) raising awareness among campus users about sustainability, (2) building a community of “green-minded” individuals that want to support the sustainable development of their institution and (3) give campus users a framework and the means to implement their ideas and be actors of sustainability on campus. These three points correspond with the three pillars of UNI-ECO: raise awareness, cooperate and contribute.

Lessons we’ve learned during the open calls:

- Choosing four focus areas helps with receiving well thought of proposals. It is helpful for applicants as it gives them a framework and helps them see more clearly what is expected.
- Communication is key in making people enthusiastic to participate in the green challenges. Expectation management is also an important element in communication. In some cases, campus users believed that we expected a project of certain magnitude. Believing their idea was too small, they decided not to apply. In reality, both small and bigger projects were welcomed. We think that future communication campaigns should be mindful of the scale and the context of the call.
- The timing of the communication campaign is very important: the second open call ran partly in the holidays in December 2021. We believe that this explains the fewer applications.
- We received a lot of interesting projects that were not really feasible in their original form. If we do not want to discourage people, it is important to have a solution-oriented approach, and to suggest alternatives and adjustments if the project is relevant, rather than just saying no.
- Participants always start with a lot of will and dedication, but the reality is that it is hard for them to combine the development of the project with their daily occupation (job or studies). The local supporting crew needs to maintain frequent communication. The support of the local team is also important as people (especially students) are not always aware of the way the university works, the relevant contacts, rules and regulations, etc.
- The implementation of the green challenges asks for resources, like man hours and budget. It is important to dedicate these resources in advance.

The ease with which the selected green challenge projects were implemented, differed greatly between projects and the HEIs. One of the main challenges was that, even though the selection committee was well informed about the operations of the HEI, a project could sometimes not be implemented after all. Often because of time constraints of the operational staff. Managing expectations of the project groups turned out to be key in this process.

Other lessons we've learned during the implementation:

- By involving operational staff members connected to the focus areas early on, we can increase the chances of making the project happen. They are also very helpful in order to have a wider view of the consequences and requisites of a project.
- Participants always start with a lot of will and dedication, but the reality is that it is hard for them to combine the development of the project with their daily occupation (job or studies). The local supporting crew needs to maintain frequent communication. The support of the local team is also important as people (especially students) are not always aware of the way the university works, the relevant contacts, rules and regulations, etc.
- The implementation of the green challenges asks for resources, like man hours and budget. It is important to dedicate these resources in advance.

### *Replicability*

The green challenge open calls can easily be replicated, using the materials that we have developed during the UNI-ECO project. You can tailor the focus areas to topics that are relevant for you institution. We recommend to involve campus users and collect their opinion with some kind of survey. There are many ways in which you can tailor the green challenges. For more information, reach out to [Green Office Utrecht University](#).

## **4. CONCLUSION**

To conclude, the green challenges offer great potential for HEIs, and educational institutes in general, to involve campus users in co-creating a sustainable campus. The participation HEIs have all committed to continuing with the green challenges in the future. In some cases, green challenges projects also opened the door to changes that were not considered before, because the ideas of the community were innovative and powerful.

## 5. LEARN MORE

- For more information on the green challenges, [go to the UNI-ECO website](#).
- For more information about the results of the green challenges during the UNI-ECO project, have a look at our [dissemination activities](#) here.

# BEST PRACTICE: GREEN OFFICE

## UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since UNI-ECO aims to promote the adoption of green practices and to make sustainability more visible and actionable on campus, it is key to display the possibilities of a sustainability team within a HEI. There are many potent approaches, of which a Green Office is one. This chapter will guide you through the ins and outs of Green Offices and how to set up one via the best practice example of Green Office Utrecht University.

Green Office Utrecht University (GOUU) is the platform for students and employees of Utrecht University (UU) where sustainable ideas are shaped, plans are put together and projects are launched, all with the objective to make the university more sustainable. It raises awareness among students and staff about the sustainable achievements and ambitions of the UU.

Before GOUU, there was no dedicated team for students and employees at UU working on sustainability. Many UU students were critical of UU's sustainability policy, or lack thereof, and started organising their own events and initiatives. As an answer to the criticism and ideas of these students, GOUU became a reality in 2013 and has been operating ever since. GOUU's target audience is the community of UU, being the students and (non-)academic staff members. All GOUU's initiatives are related to supporting the sustainable development of UU and improving the sustainable behaviour of the community on campus. GOUU does not focus on improving the sustainable behaviour in the personal lives of its community – this falls outside of its scope.

Establishing a Green Office can be of benefit for other HEIs as well. Therefore, this chapter outlines key advice learned by GOUU to set up a Green Office at your HEI. The points of advice are supported with examples from GOUU.

### 2. PROCESS

#### Tip #1

The idea of a Green Office was not new: it stems from the Green Office Movement, which over the years has become a worldwide movement. At the time of the creation of GOUU, there were two Green Offices operating in the Netherlands. On the website of the Green Office Movement there is in depth information in the process of creating

a Green Office. Make sure to use their extensive toolbox on how to replicate the Green Office model at your own HEI. Make sure to have a look at the [website of the Green Office Movement](#) for an overview of their tangible steps and their support services.

#### Tip #2

Make sure to create or make use of a proper climate when setting up a Green Office. Firstly, the current (problematic) situation at your HEI should match with the solutions a Green Office can offer. For example, if there already are teams in which students and employees collaborate on sustainability issues at your HEI, then a Green Office might not fit in. Secondly, since a Green Office can connect bottom-up and top-down initiatives, it can help to have the community and decision makers on your side. Thirdly, be keen on where your Green Office is located within the organisation. It will help tremendously if it fits in the right place, under the right decision maker, with the right budget.

#### **Best practice example**

Before the GOUU came to life, UU had a Project Group Sustainability. This group consisted of 3 staff members that did their work in the group besides their usual work activities. It was this project group that initialized the creation of GOUU. GOUU has received support from the university's executive board since its founding. GOUU became part of the university's corporate offices and specifically falls under the department of real estate & campus. However, since sustainability is a theme that exceeds departments, GOUU is often in contact with people from all over the university.

#### Tip #3

Connect with others, both inside and outside your HEI. Connections within your HEI will make sure that your work is aligned with other initiatives going on within your HEI. Connections outside of your institution, like UNI-ECO, will facilitate knowledge sharing, inspiration, and large scale growth.

#### **Best practice example**

GOUU connects with other initiatives within UU via multiple ways, of which the most important one is being part of its sustainability program, as mentioned before. Outside of UU, GOUU connects with other Dutch Green Offices and internationally with other universities via partnerships as UNI-ECO.

### **3. OUTCOME**

#### Tip #4

Go for tangible results, especially in the beginning of your Green Office. Your target audience will want to know why they should join your community and initiatives, and your decision makers will want to know why they invest resources into your Green

Office. One or multiple tangible results in your first year will be needed to persuade them and to keep the positive momentum going.

#### Tip #5

Although tangible results will help you along the way, make sure to keep directing towards important long-term goals. In the end, this is why you want to create a Green Office and why it is of added value. Sometimes short-term, tangible results can be in the way of your larger vision and mission. Choose wisely!

#### **Best practice examples**

Throughout the 8 years that GOUU has operated, GOUU has had a big impact on our community. In the period 2020-2021 alone GOUU has reached over 570 community members through its numerous projects. Within its core team there are two dedicated community coordinators who tend to the community's needs and questions. In 2021, GOUU set up two project groups: these are groups of students that dedicate time to sustainable projects on campus, guided by GOUU. In the future GOUU is planning on setting up more of these groups. Moreover, there are five so-called Green Teams: in five faculties, a group of staff and students work together to improve the sustainability in their specific faculty. Similar to the project groups, GOUU intends to increase the number of active Green Teams.

#### Tip #6

Be visible both physically and virtually. To include your target audience and expand your community, it is necessary to reach out to them in the first place. Making personas and customer journeys can help to accomplish this. In any way, make sure to use the right communication and outreach measures both offline and online.

#### Tip #7

Create actual value. One key question to constantly ask here is: *“What would happen if there is no Green Office at our HEI?”*. The answers of this question will continuously steer you into a more meaningful path.

#### Tip #8

Invest in longevity of your Green Office team. Generally there is quite a quick takeover since many students are involved. Having a long-term employee in a management position in your Green Office will make sure that maintain a lot of contacts, lessons learned and ‘historical’ inspiration/foundations.

#### **Best practice examples**

There are multiple factors that attributed to GOUU’s success: first, as mentioned earlier, GOUU falls under Utrecht University's corporate offices. This resulted in people within the university knowing and trusting, and arguably most importantly,

listening to GOUU. Second, its office is located at a central point at Utrecht Science Park. This makes it easy for its community to find GOUU and reach out to. Third, the university formed a programme team sustainability in 2015, which GOUU is now a part of. This gave its professional network a boost, and attracted more staff members of UU to reach out to GOUU. Fourth, the thing that brought us to a new level of engagement, was the existence of a strong core team. GOUU works with employees, not with a board that changes yearly: this means its workflow is more fluent because GOUU does not have a yearly onboarding time for new people. New employees join the team throughout the year. This also means GOUU is able to build face: people start recognizing its team. This enables GOUU to work on multi-year strategies and visions and have a more stable increase of community engagement.

#### Tip #9

Reach out to people by just talking with them. Instead of expecting them to come to all your events, go to theirs. Get to know what they do, how and why they do it by engaging in conversations with many people. At the same time, pitch your Green Office and find a common ground. The personal touch will make your possible collaborations not only more fruitful, but also more fun.

#### Tip #10

Along the way, you will notice that not everyone cares so much about sustainability. But everyone cares about something. Your goal here should be to connect their values and interests with yours regarding sustainability. Often times health, financial matters, social security and other important general themes overlap with sustainability once you find the right angle.

#### Tip #11

Without your community you are nowhere, so invest in your community. Create opportunities for growth (trainings, job opportunities, working experience), make them feel part of a larger and important whole, and provide plenty of social moments in which they can get to know you and each other on another level.

#### Tip #12

Define a clear scope and know your boundaries. Sometimes a Green Office chooses to work on all Sustainable Development Goals. There are indeed all related and intertwined, but can you improve all of them with your capacity? And are there not already other teams working on other SDGs? If you define your goals clearer you will probably be able to have more direct impact and to collaborate better.

### **Best practice examples**

The development of GOUU did not go without hurdles. First, it was found difficult to reach people that were not yet in GOUU's "bubble" of environmentally minded people. The team tackled this problem by organizing events and projects in places where people would find themselves regardless. This way, GOUU started reaching people that normally wouldn't go out of their way to attend its events. Second, GOUU didn't actively include or got to know volunteers. This led to a loss of motivation of the volunteers as the year progressed. The team learned from this to invest in its community: give opportunities to form deeper connections with them. Third, GOUU hears a lot of great initiatives coming its way. At first, the team wanted to do it all, however they quickly noticed this was putting too much on their plate. They have learned to work with strict boundaries so that the projects they do take on, can be executed well and brought to completion.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Through the years, Green Office Utrecht University has become a staple of Utrecht University in encouraging and pushing sustainable development on campus. Being part of the university's corporate offices, being easy to find by its community, and its successes in engaging its community all contributed to its impact. The team has learned to be proactive in reaching out to people outside its regular circles, to invest in its communities, and to set clear boundaries on which projects to take on or not. This way, GOUU aims to continue to do its part in the sustainable development of Utrecht University.

Hopefully you are inspired and informed enough to set up a Green Office at your HEI as well. If you need any further inquiries, make sure to use the links below. All the best in your sustainable journey. There is positive environmental impact to make!

## **5. LEARN MORE**

- To learn more about Green Office Utrecht University, have a look at [our website](#).
- To learn more about the sustainability policies of Utrecht University, have a look [here](#).
- To learn more about the Green Office movement and how to set up a Green Office at your own HEI, have a look at the [website of the Green Office movement](#).

# BEST PRACTICE: SHARING IDEAS. THE UNIVERSITY GOES TO THE SECONDARY SCHOOL UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A good practice to highlight from the University of Barcelona is the project *Sharing Ideas. The university goes to the Secondary school*. This project is carried out annually and has been active for more than 10 years. The aim of sharing ideas is to improve the training and learning of university students and, at the same time, to provide services to society. University students go to high schools to share knowledge with secondary school students on topics related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project is specifically aimed at university students. To participate, the university provides: a programme of public speaking classes where they teach how to improve communication skills and preparatory classes on the more practical part of the information they will have to teach. The social relevance of the project lies in the students' ability to put into play the skills acquired during their learning and the dissemination of scientific knowledge beyond the university classrooms.

## 2. PROCESS

Sharing ideas is an interdisciplinary project as it involves teaching staff from different faculties and areas of knowledge. Therefore, it is the teaching staff of each faculty who must show an interest in promoting "sharing ideas" and organise themselves with their own students and with the secondary school they will attend in order to plan and carry out this educational proposal.

The project has been active since 2012 and has been very well received since then. The project does not require large amounts of money to be carried out because the teachers who organise it and the students who come to the school do it altruistically and selflessly way.

## 3. OUTCOME

There are currently 11 faculties of the University of Barcelona that are part of the programme, with an offer of more than 42 training proposals in the artistic, social, humanistic, and scientific fields. Some of the workshops that have been taught during the academic year 2021-2022 are:

- Does globalisation influence our fauna?
- Recycling: reanimation of matter.
- The value of solidarity in times of pandemic.
- How do we fight to protect and defend the environment?
- Aluminium foil or lunch box?



Workshop "Aluminium foil or lunch box? Taught by fourth year students of the Engineering degree.

Students from the high schools attended emphasise the practicality of the knowledge they learned, as well as the better understanding due to the fact that the university students are close to their age. The biggest challenge in carrying out this type of project is to have the involvement of both the teaching staff to organise it in their free time and the students to give the workshops, because it is not remunerated for any of them.

#### *Lessons learned*

This project is very effective. This type of experience brings important benefits for both high school and university students in terms of environmental awareness, cooperation and focusing on the concerns of young people. It is an educational proposal that combines learning and community service in a single project.

#### *Replicability*

We believe that the project *Sharing ideas. The university goes to the secondary school* could be easily replicable in other universities because it does not require an extensive range of materials or a large initial investment.

## 4. CONCLUSION

We have selected this example due to the great participation of students, as well as the awareness-raising capacity they generated and continue to do in the university community.

## 5. LEARN MORE

- [Projecte "Compartir idees: la universitat va a l'institut" - YouTube](#)
- [null \(ub.edu\)](#)
- [Compartir Idees. La Universitat va a l'Institut | ApSUB](#)
- [Compartir idees: quan la universitat va a l'institut - Aprenentatge Servei \(diarieducacio.cat\)](#)
- [La universitat va a l'institut - Escola Pia Nostra Senyora](#)

# BEST PRACTICE: KEFAXOKI CAMPAIGN

## UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Barcelona is making multiple efforts, from different spheres and through different social agents, to raise awareness among the university community of the need to address the Sustainable Development Goals. Most practices that have been carried out for some years at the University of Barcelona are related to raising awareness and disseminating environmental knowledge.

The [KEFAXOKI campaign](#) was born in November 2020 as part of the activities of the [European Week for Waste Reduction](#). The KEFAXOKI campaign lasted 3 months and had two objectives: (1) to highlight the amount of unnecessary single-use products found in the waste bins at the University of Barcelona and, (2) to provide information to improve waste separation. The campaign was aimed at the entire university community - from students, teaching staff to administrative and service staff - and the actions that formed part of the KEFAXOKI campaign were: animations on advertising screens in the different faculties that make up the university, messages on social networks, a competition called "Què fa això aquí? Menys residus a la UB", and finally, [the Waste Autopsy project](#), which included a technical characterisation of the waste generated in a faculty of the University of Barcelona and the production of audiovisual material for the "Opina KEFAXOKI" draw. The social relevance of the project lies in its capacity to involve and raise awareness of the issue of waste among the entire university community through participation in competitions and draws.



Example of the animations published on the UB's advertising screens.

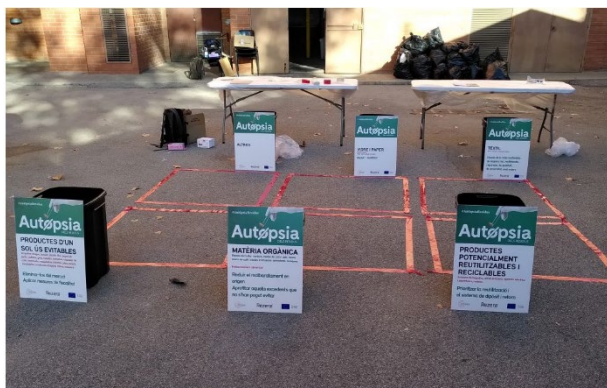
## 2. PROCESS

Since the University of Barcelona has its own Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, it commissioned the Office of Safety, Health and Environment (OSSMA, in its Catalan acronym), which is in charge of preventive activities and environmental management, to develop some kind of strategy to reduce the amount and hazardousness of waste. In this context, OSSMA was in charge of planning, creating, implementing and monitoring the whole process.

## 3. OUTCOME

Despite the covid-19 socio-sanitary crisis in which we found ourselves at the time the KEFAXOKI campaign was launched - which meant that a high percentage of classes were in telematic format - it was very well received, especially by the students. The project did not require huge amounts of money because the environmental training and awareness-raising was based on the use of competitions and draws as a learning methodology. Through social media, members of the university community showed, interacted, and shared original ways to inspire others to reduce waste or separate waste correctly.

The waste autopsy made it possible to quantify the amount and type of waste being generated at the university and to see how the covid-19 situation had partly affected the waste we generated. Thanks to this waste autopsy, a lot of waste of food and other products was detected that could be easily avoided with the use of reusable bottles and lunch boxes.



Waste autopsy at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Food Sciences.

### *Lessons learned*

This campaign is very effective. One of the biggest benefits was to learn first-hand about the waste problems the university was facing and to look for alternatives to raise awareness among the university community.

### *Replicability*

This could be replicated at other universities.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

We believe that the KEFAXOKI campaign could be easily replicated in other universities or in a wider context as it does not require a wide range of materials or a large initial investment. In addition, we consider that it can bring many benefits in terms of environmental awareness and as an environmental audit to know the danger of the waste generated and to be able to find alternatives that help to reduce or mitigate certain products.

#### 5. LEARN MORE

- [KeFaXoKi\\_UB: campanya de sensibilització ambiental sobre residus – Oficina de Seguretat, Salut i Medi Ambient](#)
- [OpinaKeFaXoKiUB – Oficina de Seguretat, Salut i Medi Ambient](#)
- [Participa en el Concurs “Què fa això aquí? Menys residus a la UB” – Oficina de Seguretat, Salut i Medi Ambient](#)
- [Autòpsia de residus a la UB per identificar els residus que generem – Oficina de Seguretat, Salut i Medi Ambient](#)

# BEST PRACTICE: ENGAGEMENT WITH PURPOSE

## – USING A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO DRIVE POLICY

### TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

From 2016 to 2021 Trinity College undertook a concerted effort to provide a better structure and support for student and staff involvement in sustainability initiatives as well as to generate a more joined-up approach between community engagement and College Governance. The pre-existing Green Campus Committee has brought staff and students together to take action on environmental issues since 2013, however there was no direct link between the Green Campus Committee and central university governance (ultimately the College Board). From 2016, a number of new structures and supports has helped to enhance and enable engagement among the community as well as bring a sustainability focus to central governance and the College Board. This example of a “Best Practice” from Trinity encompasses a number of changes and initiatives so the scope is broad, including all members of the community.

#### 2. PROCESS

Change was lead from the top with the Provost (President) of Trinity College triggering a number of initiatives, working together with the Registrar, the Sustainability Advisor, the Estates and Facilities Department and the Green Campus Committee (GCC) at that time. Key steps involved:

- Creation of an annual [Sustainability Report](#) (focusing on nine key areas) delivered to College Board for its oversight and approval. The report sets and reports on targets in these nine key areas.
- Establishment of the [Provost’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability](#): This committee, Co-Chaired by the Provost and Registrar included members from Estates and Facilities, the GCC, academic experts and students. It provided a channel of communication between the key sustainability groups and players (e.g. College Board, student groups, staff committees). It also provided a forum for the development of new initiatives and a driving force for policy development.
- A sustainability fund was established to support staff and student projects.

- A Sustainability Advisor to the Office of the Provost was engaged to focus on strategy development and communication and engagement and this led to a number of key initiatives such as updated policies, educational programmes for staff and students and far reaching engagement projects.
- Updating and expanding our [Green Pages](#) (sustainability website) and promoting the pages repeatedly throughout the year, keeping them active. [7,933 page views in 2019 for /provost/sustainability vs 2,394 in 2018, for example]

### 3. OUTCOME

Sustainability Reports to the Board have formed an important basis to inform and drive change, creating conversations with the key decision makers and generating ideas and action on how to close gaps in targets highlighted by the reports.

The Provost's Advisory Committee on Sustainability administered the Sustainability Fund during this period and initiated and developed the drafting of policies on Sustainability, Sustainable Procurement and Travel as well as monitoring and developing the drafting of the Sustainability Report annually.

The Sustainability fund has funded 20 projects to date to the amount of €12,403. Some of the highlights include our Neuroscience research lab obtaining external Green Lab certification, and kicking off Trinity's Green Labs programme; launching a student environmental magazine; creating a community vegetable garden at one of our residence halls; 3D printing and recycling of plastic cuvettes used for large-scale science teaching labs, avoiding large amounts of plastic waste; a comprehensive biodiversity audit of Trinity's main campus. Reaching students and staff who have excellent ideas and funding those ideas is the crowning achievement of this initiative.

Communication and engagement on sustainability has been made a priority in recent years. The communications strategy has vastly increased our staff and students' knowledge and interest in sustainability topics. This was clear from the level of engagement we had on the Uni-Eco survey of students and staff – with minimal invitation to participate in the survey, we received a response rate of almost 5% from our population of 21,476. In addition, total waste figures dropped by 9% between 2018 and 2019 (despite a population increase), reflecting – we believe – the enhanced level of environmental awareness in our community.

#### *Success factors:*

- A pre-existing Green Campus Committee, engaging environmentally minded staff and students for many years.

- Leadership of Senior College Officers: The President of the University (Provost), working with the Registrar, instigated the structural changes. Openness to and prioritisation of the governance changes needed.
- Engagement of a Sustainability Advisor with valuable expertise and experience with successful community engagement.
- A receptive and open community, willing to get involved.

*Lessons learned:*

Some great gains have been made in Trinity's sustainability journey with this approach, but the impacts were limited by the absence of a more strategic, centralised structure to co-ordinate and drive change. Planning for such centralised organisation and the extra resources it will require is now underway as part of the restructuring following a change in College Governance (as of academic year 2021/22). We anticipate this will take Trinity on its next leap in terms of our sustainability journey.

*Replicability:*

While the specific structures introduced were appropriate for Trinity at this time in its sustainability journey and may not be exactly transposable to other campuses, the principles of joining bottom-up and top-down approaches, engaging across the community and resourcing community initiatives are important to implement in whatever way is appropriate for each University. With adequate dedicated resources (staff, budget, etc.) and leadership, the approach taken by our engagement programme is replicable at other universities, either as stand-alone steps or as a whole programme.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Joining bottom-up and top-down initiatives at Trinity has been an important step toward a more coherent and effective approach to campus sustainability. The approach greatly helped to raise awareness among our population. It succeeded in updating three key university policies (Sustainability, Waste and Travel policies) and created a new policy (Sustainable Procurement Policy). It empowers students and staff to engage in sustainability actions and has given our community permission to participate in climate and biodiversity actions across the university.

## 5. LEARN MORE

Learn more about Trinity's Sustainability approach here:

- [Sustainability reports](#)
- [Sustainability Fund](#)
- [Recording of the presentation of this Best Practice at the 2021 UNI-ECO Summer School](#)

# BEST PRACTICE: VOTING CAMPAIGNS AS AN AWARENESS RAISING AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

To better engage students and staff in decision-making on campus and to create a sense of personal involvement in sustainability challenges, Trinity College has used voting campaigns where simple questions are posed or the community are asked for their views. Importantly, the outcomes of the campaigns must be tangible, resulting in real action, which gives the community a sense of being part of real sustainability changes. To achieve this Trinity has worked closely with an innovative voting platform provider [OneStepCloser](#). Since 2018 we have run 19 voting campaigns, which recruited 36832 individual votes, as well as the associated actions/changes that resulted.

The campaigns have been run across very diverse themes and in association with many different initiatives so the scope is very wide, working together with different groups (e.g. Green Campus Committee, UNI-ECO, sustainable transport, Estates and Facilities, the Provost's Office and many more), reaching all of the internal community, and, where appropriate, the wider public.

## 2. PROCESS

It is important to identify topical areas where the community can have an input and to ensure that there is a real impact that can be communicated back to the community following the campaign. For example, the campaigns have covered topics from single use plastics to paper consumption, food choices available on campus, biodiversity enhancement, availability of water fountains etc. Each question/vote is tagged with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relevant to that topic.

A close working relationship between the sustainability leadership on campus, the college communications department and the voting platform provider is important. The group/sector of the university who wishes to implement change and involve the community works therefore as part of a co-ordinated sustainability effort, with the comms department and the platform. A simple question or choice is put to the community to vote. For example which of three sustainable lunch options they would like to see served in the canteen: in this case 1372 votes led to vegetarian lasagne being added which was sold out within 2 hours on the first day of serving. This means positive action that the community feels part of, as well as the other benefits of the change. The communications department play an important role in getting the message out on social media and the follow-up communications of the outcome, as well as adding other communications around the topic, to build the impact.

### 3. OUTCOME

In total, 19 voting campaigns to date have been executed. They have engaged 36.832 students and staff, with an engagement level of 10-22% per campaign; much higher than traditional engagement levels. Campaigns have included:

- Vote for the theme of Green Week (February 2022) ‘Repairing our Broken Food Systems’
- What percentage of the canteen menu should go vegan/vegetarian for Green Week?
- Vote for which project would receive the Provost COP26 Sustainability Fund
- What climate friendly products should the Student’s Union shop stock?
- Which action to take to reduce plastics use on campus?
- Which type of printing paper should be stocked across campus (genuinely recycled paper)?
- Vote for the best “green lab”
- Vote for the focus of the Provost’s Innovation challenge (e.g. reduce reliance on plastics; food waste)
- Vote on where to place a bicycle pump and repair station
- Vote on where to place water refill stations on campus
- The topics to be covered in the UNI-ECO Summer School
- Where to place vegan/ palm oil free vending machines
- What topic to debate in Green week

Two specific campaigns are highlighted as examples.

### 1. Wildflowers

In the summer of 2020, Trinity planted wildflower meadows on College Green after thousands of students, staff and members of the public voted to replace the manicured lawns beside Front Gate with the more nature-friendly alternative. This was the first voting campaign marketed to the general public.

The voting campaign was run as part of the university's response to the biodiversity crisis, highlighting the value of wildflowers and reduced lawn mowing to support biodiversity, providing a habitat for native insects and food for pollinators in the city center. 13,850 votes were received, with around 90% in favour of the conversion to wildflower meadows.

The vote was launched via social media, screens around campus and Students' Union email, as well as a general email to all staff and students. A video was released explaining the 'wildflower' project on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. After the initial Twitter post announcing the vote (below) we saw hundreds of organic posts and shares (223 from our first post below). The buzz online was aided by an [article](#) written in the Irish Times as well as coverage in other national and international news sites

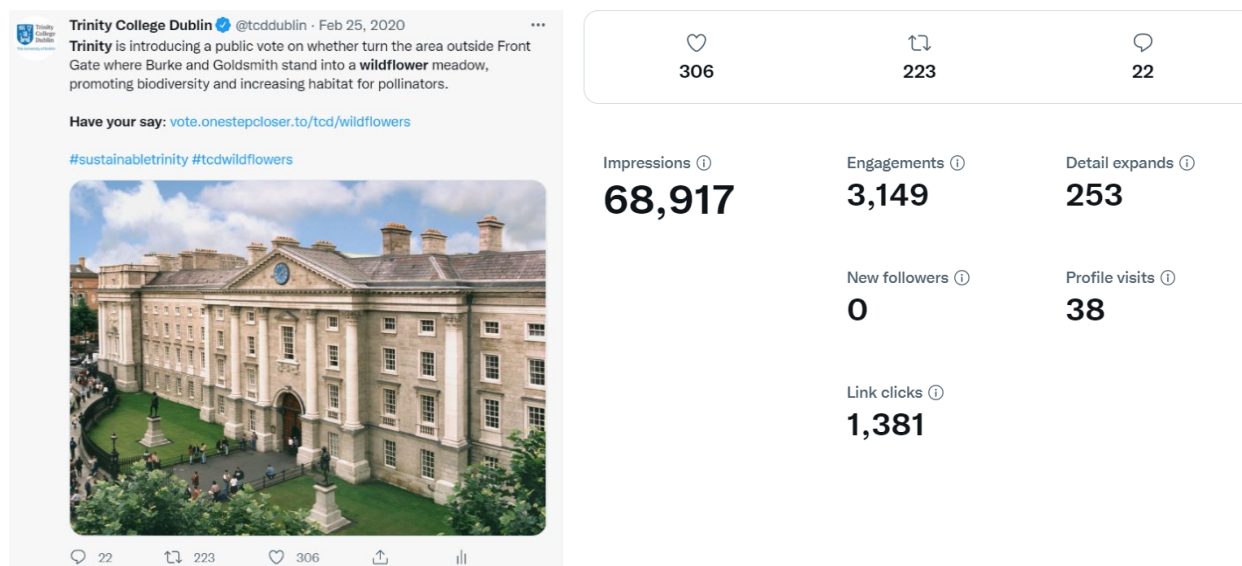


Image 1. The tweet on the wildflower meadow created much engagement on social media.

The vote was promoted via Instagram stories including interviews with students around campus about the wildflowers with a direct correlation between posting an Instagram story and vote numbers rising. When we announced the results of the vote on 1 May 2020, we received 724 likes, 276 from non-followers which tells us we were reaching a broader audience.

We utilized LinkedIn to target staff and alumni which make up the majority of our over 190,000 followers on this platform. We saw higher than usual engagement on Facebook with 6,160 likes and 341 shares of the initial Facebook post.

## 2. One vote, one bulb

In 2019 a campaign was run to support the planting of pollinator friendly flower bulbs on campus. Students and staff were invited to vote for one of three flowers they'd like to see on campus. For each vote, a bulb of that type would be planted. This vote spread awareness of the importance of pollinator friendly plants and provided a beautiful, visual result of participation. Posts on Twitter garnered 21,825 impressions and 1,099 video views with 473 engagements. Instagram stories had a total of 12,653 total views at 603 engagements. Facebook saw 7,052 impressions, 202 engagements and LinkedIn had 18,116 impressions and 362 engagements. We received a total of 1,317 votes and [Estates and Facilities](#) were so impressed with the number of votes that they agreed to increase the bulbs to 2,000.

Thanks to You these pollinator friendly bulbs will be planted on campus!



569 Bluebell bulbs



314 Fritillaria bulbs



434 Chinodoxa bulbs



Image 2. Campus users voted on the bulbs they wanted to be planted on campus.



Image 3. The outcome of the bulb campaign.

#### *Success factors:*

- There is a strong wish to be 'active participants' in the sustainability solutions and impact projects on campus – not just passive observers.
- Close collaboration with the Communications Department to enhance each campaign
- Engagement of OneStepCloser with a close collaborative working relationship
- Co-ordinated approach to sustainability initiatives across the campus

#### *Lessons learned:*

These campaigns are very effective. It is important to ensure that there is a tangible outcome that the voting community can feel invested in. It is also important to follow up with communication about the outcome and additional information.

#### *Replicability:*

This could be replicated at other Universities.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Voting campaigns such as those Trinity has run in collaboration with One Step Closer are an effective way of helping to raise awareness of sustainability challenges in a simple way, to empower people to influence tangible positive change and build a sense of community. These campaigns are built around 'Action, Results, Impact', bringing personal context and a sense of empowerment to staff and students around sustainability issues, boosting trust. To cite feedback: "Sustainability wins feel like personal wins as my votes help make them happen".

## 5. LEARN MORE

- [OneStepCloser](#)
- [Irish Times article on wildflowers](#)
- [Twitter announcement of one vote one bulb voting outcome](#)
- [Video by Prof John Parnell](#)

# BEST PRACTICE: INSULATION AND ENERGY-EFFICIENT RENOVATION

## ELTE EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

ELTE Eötvös Loránd University's buildings are in many places and were built at different times, and their conditions are also significantly different. However, insulation and energy-efficient renovation have been necessary in almost every building lately.

The university received a non-refundable grant of HUF 5 billion (12.600.000 euros) for the energy development of its infrastructure within the framework of the project KEHOP-5.2.4-15-2016-00003 of the Environmental and Energy Efficiency Operative Program. A total of 15 buildings were comprehensively modernized, more than one hundred thousand square meters have been renovated.

The program took place between 2016 and 2018.

The investment covered some of the university's training units (Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Public and Law Sciences, Faculty of Teacher Training and Kindergarten, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology), dormitories, as well as other educational institutions and locations.

### 2. PROCESS

The buildings involved in the renovation were selected on the basis of their energy efficiency indicators by the Technical Directorate General of ELTE, and together with the Ministry of National Development, they determined the range of buildings involved in the investment, after which a preliminary energy assessment of the buildings took place. The handover of the work areas to the winning companies began on March 1, 2017, following the successful completion of the planning and preparation works, as well as the conclusion of the open public procurement procedures announced for the implementation. Due to the support financed by the project, ELTE was able to initiate a medium-term investment process that would make it possible to build European-standard infrastructure.

During the renovation, among other things, the buildings received additional external thermal insulation; the external windows and doors were replaced, including 5,000 new windows; the boilers and heating systems were modernized. As a result of the investment, the university is expected to achieve annual energy savings of HUF 300 million (760.000 euros).

Solar panels have also been installed on the university buildings involved in the renovation, which, after being put into operation, produce a significant amount of primary energy of nearly 0.7 MVA for ELTE. The investments made it possible for the energy classification of the affected buildings to go up by at least one category and for half of the buildings involved in the renovation to advance by more classifications.

### 3. OUTCOME

One of the outstanding advantages of the investment is that the carbon dioxide produced by ELTE's buildings, which now operate with modern energy systems, is reduced by nearly 4.600 tons per year compared to the previous amount. The university concluded contracts with the implementing contractors with content that exceeded its preliminary expectations and was below the cover value of the available EU funds. The investments made it possible for the energy classification of the affected buildings to advance by at least one, but almost half a classification. Additional figures: in all cases, the installed exterior facade doors and windows comply with the relevant 7/2006. (V. 24.) According to the TNM regulation, if they are below  $U_{w1.15W/m^2K}$ , a reduction of heating energy of at least 10% can be expected in each of the buildings.

The technical condition and appearance of the buildings improved significantly. The students and their teachers studying in the affected buildings can continue their daily work in more modern and comfortable conditions.

#### *Success factors:*

The main success of insulation and energy development was due to European Union support and careful planning.

#### *Barriers:*

One of the biggest challenges was the volume of the project; there were a lot of sub-processes at 15 locations, and the quality of the work had to be constantly checked.

*Lessons learned:*

Modernization brought significant savings, and the proportion of renewable energy can be demonstrated. The amount of carbon dioxide emitted has also decreased. Renovations would be good for the other buildings as well.

*Replicability:*

The project is all replicable, on a smaller or even bigger scale.

**4. CONCLUSION**

This good practice was chosen because it is an example of the renovation process of a large institution. It consists of several elements and brought significant results, which is very important from the climate protection point of view.

**5. LEARN MORE**

- <https://www.elte.hu/kehop>

# BEST PRACTICES: TOGETHER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS, A VOLUNTARY-BASED SUSTAINABILITY AND SAVINGS PROGRAM (ELTE TEC) ELTE EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Before 2008, environmental protection movements already existed at ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, but in a less organized manner and not at every unit. It was the same case with selective waste collection: at several places some types of waste were only collected. That year, an agreement was reached between the university management, student civil organizations, and the student government that the selective collection system would be upgraded within a wider framework. To organize and run this, volunteers were sought from the very beginning of the program. The main goals were to involve as many participants as possible, so that they would be more committed to the topic, as well as to solve the human resources problems that this new task caused.

The first name of the group and the program was University Students for an Environmentally Conscious Attitude. In 2015 the name was changed to: ELTE Together for Environmental Consciousness (ELTE TEC).

The program began in 2008 and continues to this day, just like the group. ELTE has parts in the capital and rural areas. The EKSZ (ELTE TEC) currently only operates in the capital region, but we would expand it according to the plans. Its main target audience is still the university community, but participants from outside the university are also welcome. At the beginning of the program, many civil organizations and community building specialists were approached to help develop the basis of the operation. It is currently backed by a legal entity.

The program is responsible for waste management, non-formal environmental education and other SD-activities (biodiversity, workshops, policies). It is not responsible for formal university education or research.

## 2. PROCESS

In 2008, a call was sent to the university community for those who wanted to participate in active environmental protection. Of the applications, 98% were students, and this proportion remained the same during the years. The groups were guided by one or two working group leaders, whose work was assisted by coordinators and the chief coordinators. Depending on the location, there were 10–60 people in each group. At that time, 15 groups were operating. Their task was to organize and conduct environmental protection programs such as selective waste collection, garden care, animal protection, attitude formation, etc.

*The work of the volunteers was supported by a complex motivational system: extra points on dormitory applications, scholarship certificates, and study credits. A recommendation for the job search portfolio was written for newly graduated students.*

In 2012, a significant improvement began: the groups were renamed to "sustainability working groups". The working groups' leaders became the sustainability coordinators, and only one main coordinator remained. Thus, the organizational hierarchy remained low. The decisions were partly made by the volunteers, and partly based on an ethical and operating code developed during the years. This code was based on the main civil and professional environmental protection policies.

Since 2015, the work of the groups has been approaching the UN's sustainable development goals (UN SDG 17).

Currently, the development of policies is also part of the tasks. They aim to cooperate and exchange experiences through the pursuit of environmental activities, non-formal education, and the implementation of sustainable development projects in Hungarian higher education institutions and related communities. The main activities of the sustainability program are: waste management; animal protection and community gardening; Environmentally Conscious University; Craft workshops made of waste; Sustainability education: development of environmental awareness campaigns; production of films, photos, and posters; organization of Sustainability Days; bicycle service; organization of exhibitions in cooperation (Waste Academy, Waste Product Exhibition). The 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced operations and the number of members. Membership renewal and organizational development are currently underway.

The management of the program keeps in constant contact with the university management, operations, student governments, and other units. The working groups also meet in person once every six months, and keep in touch via mailing lists, Facebook, and in person.

### 3. OUTCOME

Since the start of the program, about 1.000 volunteers have registered. There were many volunteers who remained participants in the program for years. About 55.000 volunteer work hours were completed in the communities. They help to collect 200-450 tons of selective waste every year, thus achieving significant savings of several million forints for the institution.

Selective collection, oil collection, composting, bird protection, environmental awareness programs were created and maintained by them at the university.

The sustainability program operates 1.500 selective bins through the volunteer system: 115.000 litres of selective waste is collected per week.

Currently, a total of 12.000 litres of kitchen composting capacity and 48,000 litres of leaf composting capacity are available in the units by the volunteers.

The basic problem was largely solved by this form of operation, but a redesign is necessary from time to time because the tasks are becoming more complex.

The EKSZ (ELTE TEC) has made an impact on university communities too. It has become a new community-creating tool, but therein lies also the challenge: its development must be constantly monitored.

#### *Success factors:*

The success of the program requires institutional support, independent scope on certain issues, a minimum financial base, and perseverance to face the challenges of community formation. There should be regular meetings and a transparent assignment. It helps a lot if you have an own legal entity background.

#### *Barriers:*

During the academic year, the fluctuation of volunteers and maintaining their motivation was a real challenge. Personal participation in the campaigns was negatively affected by university exams. COVID-19 significantly reduced the number of participants. Amortization of assets is also a huge challenge.

#### *Lessons learned:*

Working with volunteers is a very interesting task that requires a lot of investment, but it can have many positive and unexpected effects. Personal commitment and the actual desire to do something add up to significant results.

### *Replicability*

It is possible even if the sustainability system is different at other universities, because volunteers can be organized for smaller or larger projects. Importantly, since this is a grassroots process, the volunteer should feel that he/she is not an employee.

The Higher Education Act in Hungary makes volunteering a university subject. A similar measure or law could be an important component in replicating the program at universities in other countries.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

One of the keys to a more sustainable environment and life is that as many people as possible think in an environmentally conscious way and use the developed methods and systems. Individuals' commitment grows as they become more involved in the processes. This acquired additional knowledge as a volunteer can be transferred even after graduation to create new environmentally conscious subsystems.

## **5. LEARN MORE**

- <http://www.fenntarthatosag.elte.hu/>
- [www.facebook.com/elteeksz](http://www.facebook.com/elteeksz)
- <https://www.instagram.com/elteeksz/?hl=en>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwMcStnvg8E>
- <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.269345889752120&type=3>

# BEST PRACTICES: INSTITUTIONAL COMPOSTING

## ELTE EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Composting is an important component of institutional waste management. With its implementation, the amount of mixed waste can be reduced by up to 29–40%, high-quality humus can be produced, and it provides an excellent habitat for soil-dwelling organisms.

Making compost did not exist at ELTE Eötvös Loránd University in the early 2000s, so green waste left the institution with mixed waste. The demand arose around 2008 that, as part of the expanding selective waste collection, the environmentally conscious management of green waste should also be solved. Since this sustainability procedure had not yet been applied at that time, the first goal was to establish composting at one site and introduce it at other sites of the university based on its lessons learned. After the introduction of the trial system, our secondary goal was to make the process sustainable and extremely low budget at the university in the long term. So we tested a larger volume and thus more logistics methods.

In the description of the best practice, we will mostly detail the course of the pilot and also cover the process of the second phase, referring to the barriers and difficulties that may appear.

The introduction period of composting was between 2008 and 2010 in the Vezér Dormitory of ELTE Eötvös Loránd University by sustainability volunteers (EKSZ), and since 2010 it has been gradually developed and monitored according to local capacities. Since ELTE Eötvös University consists of many institutional units, the process is still ongoing.

Composting (based on local conditions) works mainly in dormitories but also partly on campuses and in other units (sports facilities, library, administrative center). It works in 14 units, is about to be introduced in 10 units, and cannot be used in 3 places.

Since composting takes place mainly in dormitories, the main target audience is students, but in the long term, we would like to involve employees as much as possible.

## 2. PROCESS

The composting process can basically be divided into two basic waste streams: garden green waste (leaves, branches) and kitchen green waste (coffee grounds, vegetable peels, fruit peels, leftovers, egg shells).

### *Green garden waste*

While the collection and management of green garden waste is a task that requires the involvement of a few people, kitchen composting requires the participation of the entire local community.

That is why the collection and management of garden waste was mainly based on communication with the dormitory management. The initiating sustainability volunteers discussed the details with them (responsibility, waste stream). In professional matters, they asked for advice and professional guidance from civil organizations dealing with composting (Compost Forum Hungary).

Based on these, garden green waste is also composted locally: leaves and chopped tree branches in a 900-liter leaf composter; and the quantity that does not meet the capacity of the garden is transported to an industrial composter. Residents use the larger branches that cannot be ground for community grilling and cooking. The humus from leaf compost is also used locally in the garden.

### *Kitchen composting*

Kitchen composting is a much more complex task, so communication was made with the dormitory management, professional NGO, the student government (9 members) and all the dormitory residents (363 residents – 40 people /floor). We established cooperation with the management, in which they authorized the processes, the NGO gave professional advice and provided training (compost master training), the correct collection procedure was communicated to the student government and the residents, and they assumed the role of active collectors. The sustainability volunteers organized themselves into working groups and supervised and carried out the entire collection process.

ELTE Vezér Dormitory is a nine-floor building. The concept was to place a 10-liter compost bucket with a lid that can be opened and closed with one foot in the kitchens of all nine floors.

As for information materials, a poster was placed next to each bin, and Facebook posts, emails, and free in-person courses were organized to help the communication.

The sustainability volunteers collected the compost from the compost bins every day, measured the amounts, and transferred them to the outdoor composter in the dormitory garden. At the beginning of the process, if there was trash that didn't belong there, the volunteers took it out. Luckily, this didn't happen too many times because the residents collected the waste according to the notices.

Outside, the compost was collected in 250-liter containers with a lid. Additives were added to the compost (wood leaves, zeolite, mulch, water) according to the water content. The compost was turned over every six months, and then, at the end of the composting process, it was sieved and the finished humus was used locally in the garden.

As a means of disseminating the process, the creation of the collection began at other locations of the university as well. The priority everywhere was to keep the compost in place, the low budget, and the high involvement of the students. This was achieved with small modifications depending on local circumstances.

### 3. OUTCOME

With regards to the kitchen compost, on average, 10 litres of compost were collected per day. A six-month measurement phase was carried out, based on which the average weight was 5.3 kg. That way, later on, it was no longer necessary to measure each time; we just calculated the weight based on the volume.

Based on experience, kitchen composting can be solved relatively easily for communities of up to 300 people, but it is difficult for communities with more than that. Occasional incorrect collection had a negative impact on the perception of composting.

During the pilot period (2008–2010), 3.800 kg of kitchen waste and 80m<sup>3</sup> of garden waste was composted.

Currently, a total of 12.000 litres of kitchen composting capacity and 48.000 litres of leaf composting capacity are available in the units.

90% of the initial problems were solved. (There is still compostable waste in the mixed bin.)

#### *Success factors*

The operation of composting requires a high degree of commitment, a thorough analysis of local logistics, and the design of a suitable collection container. It is extremely important that the human resource requirement for collection is met. The national waste management law must ensure the possibility of local composting.

#### *Barriers*

Quantitative problems also arose with garden waste: too many tree branches and leaves accumulated, which were difficult to handle locally. This is how a hybrid system was created: composting is carried out locally up to capacity, and the unplaceable material goes to an industrial composter.

We also encountered quality challenges during the process: when composting in the kitchen, things that didn't belong were sometimes included (meat, bread), and vegetables were not cut into 5 cm pieces (so the process was slower).

The problem with garden composting was that the compost was dry, which can be alleviated by adding rainwater and effective microorganisms.

#### *Lessons learned*

The participants can get used to the system very quickly and are willing to compost. However, there are always 1-2 incorrect collections. Huge results can be achieved with a lot of patience and good organization. A lot of money is not the most important condition for the process.

#### *Replicability*

In order to repeat the project, the similarity of the local features is important. If local laws or logistics do not allow composting, it must be disposed of in another way. The details described in the *Success factor* chapter are fundamentally important.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Institutional composting is one of the most complex and interesting sustainability practices that has brought great results and many experiences. The more people

start dealing with green waste at an institutional level, the greater will be the impact of universities on active climate protection processes.

## 5. LEARN MORE

- <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.718026154884089&type=3>
- <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.291578967528812&type=3>



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## Project

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## Partnership

- UNIVERSITE DE MONTPELLIER (France, Coordinator)
- UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA (Spain),
- THE PROVOST, FELLOWS, FOUNDATION SCHOLARS & THE OTHER MEMBERS OF BOARD OF THE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY & UNDIVIDED TRINITY OF QUEEN ELIZABETH NEAR DUBLIN (Ireland),
- UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT (the Netherlands),
- EOTVOS LORAND TUDOMANYEGYETEM (Hungary),
- UNIMED – UNIONE DELLE UNIVERSITÀ DEL MEDITERRANEO (Italy),
- CESIE (Italy)

## Communication

- Follow up on the project’s social networks...



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