University of Zurich UZH

Sustainability Policy

English translation of the corresponding document ratified by the Extended Executive Board of the University on 5 February 2019.[1]

Preamble

The UZH Mission Statement sets out that "sustainability in scholarship as well as in […] operations [is] a core responsibility."[2] The Sustainability Policy aims to codify this principle by formulating an overarching objective for strengthening sustainability at UZH. Sustainability goals will be included in UZH's priority programs going forward.

Overarching objective

UZH is committed to the active and systematic promotion of sustainable development on every level. Members of the University contribute to this goal within the scope of their duties. The Executive Board of the University and the faculties recognize their duty to promote sustainable development through research and teaching, providing services and engaging in a dialogue with the public. UZH's governance structures, organizational and management culture, and daily operations are in line with the goal of sustainable development.

The goal of sustainable development is the current and future well-being of all people. The basis for this is the conservation of the natural life-sustaining systems of the planet, the establishment of peace, the protection of human rights, and the upholding of social justice within and between nations. The United Nations has codified an approach to these issues in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs[3]). UZH uses the SDGs as a framework of reference for its contributions to sustainable development.

UZH supports sustainable development on two levels:

– First, through the content of its research and teaching, which contributes to the sustainable development discourse on a scientific basis, in particular in exchange with the public and decision-makers in business, politics and civil society;

– Second, through exemplary action with a long-term focus in all areas, combined with critical reflection on the impact of its own activities and a focus on the University's responsibility towards society.

Specification and implementation

The following general principles apply to the specification and implementation of the Sustainability Policy:

– When implementing the Sustainability Policy, special attention must be paid to ensuring that freedom of research and teaching at the University, which is enshrined in law (cf. § 3 University Act), is not affected. Likewise, implementing the Policy must not hinder free discourse on the content of the UZH's research and teaching activities. These freedoms are among the necessary conditions for making societal progress towards sustainable development.

– In order for the Sustainability Policy to be implemented successfully, members of the University must also take personal responsibility for sustainable development. Relationships between teaching staff and students as well as an open organizational and management culture provide an important basis for this. Furthermore, employees in Central Services can make important contributions to designing sustainable processes within the scope of their duties.

The Sustainability Policy is further elaborated on by way of the 2030 Implementation Strategy for the Sustainability Policy, which was approved by the Executive Board of the University on 29 September 2020 and acknowledged by the Extended Executive Board of the University on 3 November 2020. This document sets out 23 strategic goals and around 80 measures covering the time period until 2030.

1 Version of 2 February 2021 (acknowledged by the Extended Executive Board of the University)
2 In the version dated 23 January 2012
3 www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/