



# Sustainability and Climate Action in Higher Education

UNICA Green and SDG's  
„Approaches to Green Academic Travel“

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## Sustainability and Climate Action in Higher Education

*“[Sustainability] is a problem in which the discovery and dissemination of knowledge will play a critical role. And it is a problem that must be faced ... in ways that universities are uniquely suited to model.”*

*Drew Gilpin Faust, President of Harvard University, 2007-2018*

# Whole Institution Approach

## Research

Contributions to research and to solutions of global future questions  
(e.g. climate crisis, biodiversity loss, limited natural resources, social inequalities)

## Teaching

Integration of sustainability within the curricula  
  
Empowering students to gain the required knowledge and skills for shaping sustainable development

## Management & Campus

Reducing environmental impacts in buildings, green IT, energy efficiency, management systems, procurement, HR, community engagement, green business travel etc.

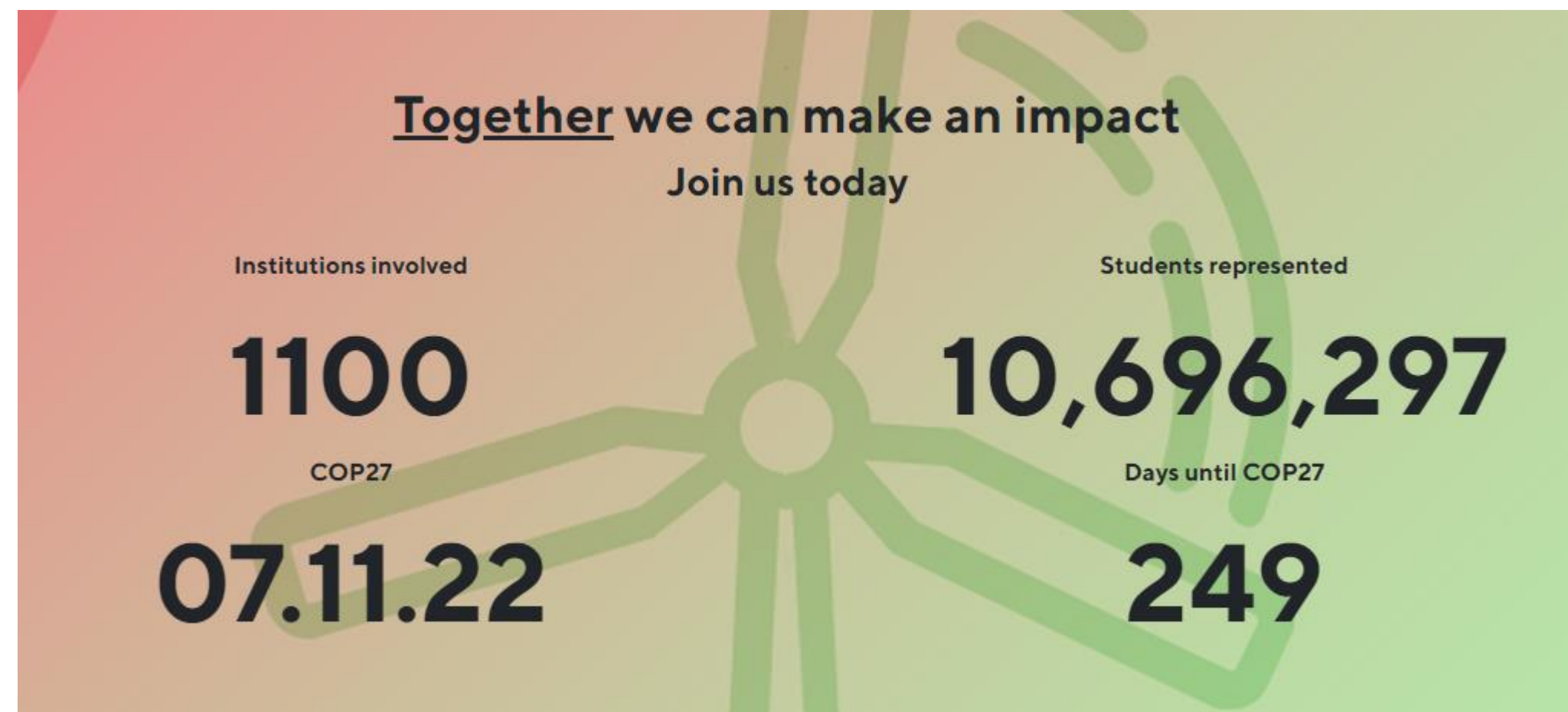
Strengthening inter- and transdisciplinary approaches

Universities as living labs  
and learning communities for sustainability

Sustainability as a holistic approach  
Dialogue with university community & public outreach  
Continuous improvement process

# Climate Emergency Declarations and Climate Action Plans in Higher Education

More and more universities are setting ambitious goals in the areas of sustainability and climate change mitigation, e.g. [Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges](#) is a global campaign to rally leadership and action in the education sector:





# Climate Emergency Declarations and Climate Action Plans in Higher Education

Freie Universität Berlin declared a state of **climate emergency in December 2019**. The Executive Board of the university passed a resolution acknowledging the university’s responsibility for climate protection and formulating seven far-reaching goals focusing on the whole university. Among other things, the university aims to become climate neutral by 2025.

Areas	Measures / Comments
<b>Improving Energy Efficiency on Campus by 10%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of energy efficiency activities</li> </ul>
<b>Increasing the use of renewable energy</b> (installation & procurement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installation of additional photovoltaic and solar thermal plants on campus</li> <li>Purchase of carbon neutral district heating,</li> <li>Switch from natural gas to biogas (partially)</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainable mobility</b> (in esp. business trips)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining a reduction goal for flight emissions</li> <li>Establishing a sustainability-compliant business travel policy</li> <li>Extending virtual communication and conferences</li> <li>Creating an internal climate fund for promoting new projects</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Offset Projects</b> (e.g. plant coal project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of compost and plant coal from green and organic waste, feasibility study shows a potential of 2,800 tons of negative emissions</li> </ul>
<b>Ideas and Innovation Management System</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting climate protection projects and living labs on campus as well as additional ideas for carbon offset mechanisms, addressing research, teaching, transfer and campus</li> </ul>

# The Role of Academic Travel

CO<sub>2</sub>-Emissions in tons 2018/19, based on the average of energy consumption in 2018 and 2019

	District heating in t	Natural gas in t	Heating oil in t	Energy in t	Vehicle Fleet in t*	Campus in t	Business travel in t (flights only**)	Business travel in t (train, bus, car)	Paper in t	Total in t
<b>CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions according to supplier information / electricity supply contract</b>	2.063	5.101	80	0	190	<b>7.433</b>	3.798	190	71	<b>11.492</b>
<b>in percent (campus only)</b>	<b>27,7%</b>	<b>68,6%</b>	<b>1,1%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>2,6%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>				
<b>in percent (campus and business travel)</b>	<b>17,9%</b>	<b>44,4%</b>	<b>0,7%</b>	<b>0,0%</b>	<b>1,7%</b>	<b>64,7%</b>	<b>33,1%</b>	<b>1,7%</b>	<b>0,6%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

\*about 680.000 km/a (2016/17)

\*\* Flights accounted for by the travel cost center, excluding student mobility.

Business trips, vehicle fleet and heating oil according to CO<sub>2</sub> values of the Federal Environment Agency, district heating, natural gas and electricity according to CO<sub>2</sub> values of the energy suppliers or the corresponding supply contracts

## The Role of Third Party Funding

Third-party funded projects play a significant role in international research cooperation. A large proportion of travel is financed by these acquired funds, which are then also subject to the regulations of the third-party funders.

**In 2018/19 over 70 percent of business trips at Freie Universität Berlin (student mobility not included) were financed by third-party funds.**

**Through their funding guidelines, third-party funders have the potential to:**

- create awareness of the applicant university or researcher
- support the choice of sustainable travel options by offering financial support or other incentives
- establish reporting guidelines and commitments
- support internal policy development.