

SUSTAINABILITY AWARD



2016

Award-winning
Projects



MINISTERIUM
FÜR EIN
LEBENSWERTES
ÖSTERREICH

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The Austrian Sustainability Award for Universities



History and Background

The Austrian Sustainability Award is a joint initiative of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management as well as the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and was established in 2007 as a means of promoting and increasing awareness for sustainability processes within Austrian universities. After a starting phase of networking and communication with the relevant stakeholders, the project has been supporting pioneers in this field by organizing a nationwide “Sustainability Award” for higher education institutions as an incentive for sustainable higher education every two years.

For Austria, the innovation was to link a publicity related approach with an internal learning process and benchmarking. The award was also the first attempt at connecting different (and separated) sustainability initiatives among various universities. The “Environmental education FORUM”, an agency specialising in Education for Sustainable Development, is in charge of the award regarding organisational matters.

Characteristics

The Austrian Sustainability Award exhibits a whole-institution approach. Thus, it is addressed to a large target group consisting of students, teachers, staff, administration and regional stakeholders. University-

wide sustainability is understood as a process of participatory and reflective learning characterized by several alternative routes. It does not target individual or one-time projects, but instead recognizes long-term processes and improvements that mirror the internal learning and formation processes of the institution as a whole, concerning eight very different aspects of university organisation. A project in each of the eight categories receives an Austrian Sustainability Award and there are second and third places as well. The categories are:

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

For each of these categories, a series of guiding questions was developed to help applicants locate their initiatives. Participation, learning and innovation should be at the very heart of each project.

An interdisciplinary jury of sustainability experts from science and research, culture and media decides on the winner in each of the eight categories. The first award ceremony took place on March 11, 2008, the second on March 8, 2010, the third on April 23, 2012 and the fourth on May 14, 2014.

Looking back, looking forward

Until 2007, many Austrian university initiatives for sustainable development were isolated and did not always get the necessary attention. In 2008 the very first Sustainability Award competition led to 43 applications by 13 universities. Two years later, the number of submitted projects (45 projects from 17 universities) was roughly the same. Due to more publicity and thanks to increased public relations (including an image film), the number of submissions rose considerably to 77 in 2012 and 82 in 2014. The biennial rhythm of the award is going to be maintained and so the next Sustainability Award is going to take place again in two years.

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

www.nachhaltige-uni.at



Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister of
Science, Research and Economy

Reinhold Mitterlehner



MINISTERIUM
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LEBENSWERTES
ÖSTERREICH

Our environment is faced with rapid, profound and sustained changes, and we are all called upon to change the way we think and act, all for the benefit of the generations succeeding us. The complex global challenges of our time need to be dealt with by including science and research to a much greater extent. In order to enable us to design a future that is liveable and sparing in its consumption of resources, the UN, too, in its current priorities highlights the great importance of education for sustainable development.

We need to point out the interdependencies between humans and their environment much more clearly and strive to handle resources and our ecosystems more sustainably. To achieve this, we need to emulate the UN programme “Education for Sustainable Development” and obtain more knowledge, more competences and more liaising on values.

Universities, including those of applied sciences and education, are the training grounds of future decision-makers and centres of pioneering research. They are fully aware of their special responsibility in the ongoing process of change towards sustainable development and they increasingly take on these responsibilities. Through their double service for teaching and research and their nature as autonomous institutions, universities are able to incorporate sustainability in their organisation, their structures, and in their teaching and research, and to align their decision-making to this end. The resulting projects reflect the internal development processes at the universities and serve as models for other institutions.

The 79 projects submitted for the Sustainability Award 2016 are satisfactory proof that universities deal with sustainable development as a major priority and are centres of innovation and research in subjects of relevance for the environment. Let me thank all contestants of the Sustainability Award 2016 for their responsible and future-focused work, and let me invite you all to continue to meet these challenges head on through your commitment and creativity.

Vice-Chancellor Reinhold Mitterlehner
Federal Minister of Science, Research and Economy



Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry,
Environment and Water Management

Andrä Rupprechter

bmwfw

Bundesministerium für
Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft

The Sustainability Award is a particularly promising prize. It was first granted in 2008; since then the number of submissions per year has almost doubled: This year as many as 79 excellent and innovative projects and initiatives were submitted. The success of the award demonstrates that sustainability has become an important dimension of the corporate culture at our universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher training.

I would like to highlight in particular the great number of inter-university projects. They illustrate an increasing exchange of knowledge and experiences in university administration, teaching, research, international cooperation as well as student initiatives. In all these areas the joint commitment towards sustainable development is an essential part of the organisation.

Sustainable development needs more than rules and regulations; it depends vitally on the cooperation and networks between cities, municipalities and regions. Universities and other post-secondary institutions should not only be involved in idea generation and implementation but should take a leading role as trend-setters - on both national and international level.

However, we also support many pioneering projects outside the tertiary educational sector. It is very important to me to establish the principles of sustainability as a guide of action not only in research but also in the educational work of schools and extracurricular institutions.

Safeguarding our bases of life is the centrepiece of my work. To be successful we need highly qualified specialists who are able to provide solutions to the complex challenges of sustainable development. I would like to thank the universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges for teacher training for their outstanding efforts towards sustainability and for their indispensable contribution to the education of future generations.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in green ink, appearing to read 'Andrä Rupprechter', written in a cursive style.

Andrä Rupprechter
Federal Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment
and Water Management

1st place:
BINE: University Professional Development Course “Education for Sustainable Development - Innovation in Teacher Education”
 Inter-university project



The University course “Education for Sustainable Development - Innovation in Teacher Education” (BINE) is a professional development course for teachers in higher education and school teachers in Austria. The main goal of BINE is to encourage participants to deal with sustainable development and education for sustainable development as a “community of learners” in a reflected way. Accordingly, the course aims (a) to improve

pedagogical research competences (mainly action research), (b) to research and reflect on educational practice in teacher education in various educational subjects, and (c) to implement sustainable development issues in the teacher education curriculum.

■ **Contact:** Franz Rauch, franz.rauch@aau.at, <http://ius.aau.at/>

2nd place:
Sustainability Challenge I Vienna University of Economics and Business

■ **Contact:** www.rce-vienna.at/sustainabilitychallenge/

3rd place:
Dementia.Active.Life. A campaign promoting physical activity for people with dementia
 Carinthia University of Applied Sciences

■ **Contact:** Eva Mir, e.mir@fh-kaernten.at

1st place:
Sustainable concrete from renewable resources
 Technical University Vienna



Concrete, as the major and most relevant building material, consumes a huge amount of raw materials, demands an extremely large amount of energy in its production and generates an extensive amount of CO₂. At the Faculty of Civil Engineering of TU Wien, current research includes the development of a new generation of energy-efficient concretes with enhanced environmental sustainability. Concretes reinforced with

fibres of hemp, flax and cellulose are currently developed and tested. These new concretes have mechanical characteristics comparable with those of traditional concrete, however, they consume considerably less non-renewable raw materials and make intensive use of locally available renewable resources.

■ **Contact:** Ildiko Merta, ildiko.merta@tuwien.ac.at

2nd place:
University Research Cluster on Sustainability
 Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt

■ **Contact:** Daniel Barben, daniel.barben@aau.at

3rd place:
Societal Responsibilities of Universities – Symposium and Dialogue-Conferences
 Inter-university project

■ **Contact:** www.nachhaltigeuniversitaeten.at

1st place:

Bachelor Degree Programme Sustainable Food Management | FH Joanneum



Sustainable Food Management is a “dual” study programme and guides students through a succession of academic semesters and work placements along the food chain. This results in the integration of theoretical learning and development of professional competences. Elements of sustainability include educational partnerships with institutions (the Chamber of Agriculture awards the certificate to manage a farm in an elective

module and all students become certified Hygiene Managers). Work placements and curricular projects are available for more than 100 farms and enterprises along the food chain. Curricular elements lead students towards practicing sustainability, from projects in the first year (case study ecological agriculture) to elective modules in the last year (Green Foods Technologies).

■ **Contact:** Johannes Haas, johannes.haas@fh-joanneum.at

2nd place:

Sustainability at WU: It’s worth arguing about Vienna University of Economics and Business

■ **Contact:** Fred Luks, fred.luks@wu.ac.at

3rd place:

Support measures for TU Wien employees with caregiving duties | Technical University Vienna

■ **Contact:** Ewa Vesely, ewa.vesely@tuwien.ac.at

1st place:

Intercultural Mentoring for Schools University of Vienna



Cultural and linguistic diversity in classrooms is now the rule rather than the exception. Pupils from migrant families are assisted in their personal and educational development through Intercultural Mentoring. The mentors are students who have migrated to Austria themselves and speak various languages. They visit a school class once a week and support pupils with migrant background. The children benefit from experiences and migration stories of their mentors. The latter have not only managed to graduate from an Austrian school but have also managed to start a university programme. Hence, mentors function as role models, showing pupils the value of multilingualism and cultural diversity. Simultaneously, the mentors are (more) appreciative of pupils and their parents with an immigrant background based on their personal experiences. They are able to mediate between parents, teachers and pupils. Currently 32 mentors are sharing their experiences in a total of 19 schools in Vienna and St. Pölten (Lower Austria).

■ **Contact:** Susanne Binder, susanne.binder@univie.ac.at

2nd place:

Student initiative SusToGo | Inter-university project

■ **Contact:** Marc Trattnig, marc.trattnig@boku.ac.at

3rd place:

GO EcoSocial: Master Thesis Platform & Training Inter-university project

■ **Contact:** Gottfried Franz Mayer, gottfried.mayer@oessfo.at

1st place:
VSC-3 – an Energy Efficient High Performance Computer with Immersion Cooling | Inter-university project



The new high performance Computer VSC-3, a joint project of four Austrian Universities, has been equipped with an immersion cooling system. Individual compute nodes are immersed in an oil bath, removing the heat. An external water circuit cools the oil. Due to higher permissible temperatures of oil compared to the standard cooling medium air, no air conditioners are required. This reduces the energy consumption by one third or

– for the VSC-3 – by 2 million kWh per year. The system has been attracting the attention of specialists in the field and the universities involved hope that their example leads to even greater savings of electrical energy.

■ **Contact:** Herbert Störi, stoeri@iap.tuwien.ac.at

2nd place:
Environmental Management Systems at Universities – Introduction and Further Development | Inter-university project

■ **Contact:** Judith Biedermann, judith.biedermann@aau.at

3rd place:
Establishment of a Sustainability Coordinator University of Applied Sciences Krems

■ **Contact:** Roman Mesicek, roman.mesicek@fh-krems.ac.at

1st place:
BOKU Crowd Lynx Idea platform | University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna



Since 2014, the Students' Union and the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences have established the innovation platform Crowd Lynx, in order to offer all staff and students the possibility to share and implement innovative and creative ideas with other people. After logging in, people can share and like ideas, comment on ideas, form teams working on an idea, add experts to an idea, participate in calls for ideas and win prizes.

The platform is designed to use the creative potential of staff and students to generate ideas that make a difference. The aim is to create involvement and participation, to promote networks and openness as well as to facilitate self-organization between BOKU members and beyond. In addition, costs and resources can often be saved by operational improvements.

■ **Contact:** Julia Buchebner, julia.buchebner@boku.ac.at

2nd place:
DecarboNet | MODUL University Vienna

■ **Contact:** Arno Scharl, scharl@modul.ac.at

3rd place:
Cooling station for gender and diversity sensitive food sharing in urban environments | Technical University Vienna

■ **Contact:** Margit Pohl, margit@igw.tuwien.ac.at

1st place:

Change challenges the continuing education of teachers; professionalisation is needed to face the challenges of the future | University of Education, Upper Austria



In 2015, approximately 5000 children of asylum seekers started school in Austria. Thus, schools are challenged to develop into inclusive institutions. Teachers need to extend their intercultural competences and the continuing education of teachers has to function as a support system. Therefore, the University of Education Upper Austria has developed a specific programme concerning “diversity” and “plurilingualism” focusing on approaching diversity, knowledge building and capability in

dealing with diversity. The formats are demand-oriented and supported by regional cooperations. The aim is to increase the teachers’ competence as well as to react to changes through diversity. The focus lies on transferring the contents into the schools in order to create successful conditions of learning for all children.

■ **Contact:** Gertrud Nachbaur, gertrud.nachbaur@ph-ooe.at

2nd place:

**Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE) Vienna
Vienna University of Economics and Business**

■ **Contact:** Christian Rammel, christian.rammel@wu.ac.at

2nd place:

Mobility Management | University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna

■ **Contact:** Michael Meschik, michael.meschik@boku.ac.at

1st place: Networking for Sustainability:

A cooperative project of the University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy with the Goethe Institute | University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy



On request of the Goethe Institute the University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy carried out a summer school event “Environment and Sustainability” in the South Caucasus region. Adolescents from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia participated. The aim was to foster competences in speaking German as well as in the field of sustainable development. Since this project was very successful, an initiative “Networking for sustainability” was started. Students of the Austrian College visited

schools to work with them for a week. The students gained teaching experiences in an intercultural context. The project was organized by teachers, the students travelled on their own initiative. The exchange of students in the South Caucasus region is going to continue, future projects in the region will be accompanied by teacher training.

■ **Contact:** Wilhelm Linder, wilhelm.linder@agrariumweltpaedagogik.at

2nd place:

Connecting Science-Society Collaborations for Sustainability Innovations | Inter-university project

■ **Contact:** Friedrich Zimmermann, friedrich.zimmermann@uni-graz.at

3rd place:

**International Resource Panel der UNEP
Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt**

■ **Contact:** Marina Fischer-Kowalski, marina.fischer-kowalski@aau.at