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Sustainability Commitments Charter 2023 - 2027



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Introduction

The broader framework of this document adheres to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development signed on September 2015 by member countries of the United Nations. As an action programme for people, the planet, and prosperity, the strength of the agenda lies in its universality and complexity, as described in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) necessary to produce the expected global changes.

Following the principles of the 2030 Agenda, the European Commission adopted the European Green Deal in 2019, which sets out a detailed vision to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. Outlining the European Union's commitment to sustainability, the Green Deal includes a 55% emission reduction target for 2030 while promoting economic growth decoupled from resource use. Dedicated to the protection of human rights and the environment, the Green Deal uses a series of concrete actions within a structured timetable and acts as an integral part of the European Commission's strategy towards implementing the UN's 2030 Agenda.

The Green Deal also recognizes the strategic role of the public administration sector in the development and implementation of sustainable logistical and infrastructural solutions that align with the goal of climate neutrality. Particular attention is paid to public educational institutions including universities, not only as engines of innovation and experimentation but also for their involvement in promoting training tools and a growing awareness of society on sustainability issues in all its forms.

At the national level, recent changes to the Italian Constitution placed sustainable development and the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and ecosystems at the centre in the interest of future generations. Changes include the transversal political majority approval of reforming Articles 9 and 41 of the Italian Constitution in February 2022. As post-pandemic economic recovery programs, the European 'Next Generation EU' and the Italian 'National Recovery and Resilience Plan' offer intersecting priorities and missions aimed at economic growth in the name of sustainability and inclusion while maintaining the objectives of the 2030 Agenda.

As stated during the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development held in New York in July 2022, the pandemic tested the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

followed by the global political situation, which brought heavy repercussions on the world of energy and the supply of raw materials. Most countries lag in implementing the goals due to governmental lack of ambition and continual prioritizing of economic growth over the Agenda's Goals. The path toward 2030 has challenges and opportunities that we must understand, aspire to, comprehend, and face.

Considering this context, the University of Padua confirms and strengthens its commitment to sustainability by linking them to its tradition of freedom while "promoting the development of a culture based on universal values such as human rights, peace, environmental protection, and international solidarity" (Article 1.2 of the Statute). A commitment sealed by over 800 years of history that retraces each point while focusing on the future of younger generations. With this Charter of Sustainability Commitments, and with the continuation of the UniPadova Sostenibile project, the University intends to promote changes within itself and in society to ensure the SDGs become 'the bold and transformative steps that are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path' as promised.

Sustainable Development Objectives: Commitments of the University of Padua

During the previous six-year rectorship, the University of Padua identified its institutional commitment to support the objectives of the 2030 Agenda by launching the UniPadova Sostenibile project. Organized and shared within the "Sustainability Commitments Charter 2018-2022", the project offers a plan of action and objectives pursued in terms of sustainability.

The identified objectives, which included the enhancement of cultural heritage, ensuring the psychological and physical well-being of staff and students, modes of employee enrichment, attentive use of resources, sustainable building, simplification, and digitization have moved towards a direction of producing a significant impact across social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors.

From a social and cultural perspective, numerous initiatives and actions were enacted to support the well-being of employees including sports, wellness, health improvements, and the opening of the Milla Baldo Ceolin child daycare centre as a means to improve work-life balance. Actions for students include the EduChef project that promotes healthy and sustainable nutrition, the implementation of quiet rooms, and the addition of student-athlete dual career incentives. The approval of the Positive Action Plans and the Gender Equality Plan, oversaw actions to ensure equal opportunity and gender equality, well-being, work-life balance, and lifelong learning services. The University opened the ElenaCornaro University Centre for gender knowledge, cultures, and policies, and offered innovative ways to improve the health of its students and employees during the pandemic while maintaining its pledge to environmental sustainability.

Actions aimed at reducing its environmental impact brought economic savings with environmentally friendly results, including separate waste collections within University buildings, reducing the use of disposable products, and installing potable water systems. Institutionalising print management and dematerialisation policies brought an annual savings of 15 tons of paper, equal to 18 tons of CO2.

The city of Padua now offers a Night Bus as an evening urban public transport service thanks to the promotion and co-financing by the University. The University launched a Green Public Procurement Policy and now only purchases electricity produced from renewable sources. Carrying out a substantial program to improve the efficiency of thermal power plants, the University expanded its policy of

pursuing urban regeneration and the containment of land consumption, for instance, by inaugurating the first University gas-free campus in 2019 that only uses energy from renewable sources.

For the first time in five years, the University achieved a reduction of its Carbon Footprint based on results that were calculated and certified according to international standards. The community and institutions bestowed the University with several awards including, but not limited to, the ASviS Giusta transizione award, the GSE Targa per l'efficienza, the Sustainable PA award, and the Compraverde award. ANVUR recognised the University for its UniPadova Sostenibile project as an "excellent and extremely relevant" Third Mission Project equipped with "highly innovative and effective" governance, and as a "best practices at a national level" and as "a useful model for other universities."

The University's commitment and the relevance of its actions have led to improvement in its international GreenMetric ranking which quantifies and compares the ecological efforts of universities around the world, moving Padua up almost 250 positions in five years (from 365 out of 619 in 2017 to 97 out of 956 in 2021).

Such a commitment has positioned the University among the top 100 universities in the world according to the 2022 Times Higher Education Impact ranking, as well as first place in Italy and sixty-first in the world according to the QS Sustainability ranking that evaluates the impact of institutions on sustainable development.

Sustainable UniPadova 2023-2027

Five years have passed since the drafting of the first University of Padua Sustainability Commitments Charter, bringing forth the publication of a second edition during events capable of generating profound changes in society. The Covid-19 pandemic, the consequences of the war in Ukraine and other ongoing conflicts and, last but not least, the impacts of climate change risk erasing years of progress in human development.

These events have brought the contributions of the University of Padua front and centre. Its commitments, at all levels and in all areas, address the consequences of the pandemic and climate change. The reformation investments it placed as part of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, and the initiatives created to support those fleeing Afghanistan, Myanmar and Ukraine have strengthened the University's identity as an institution capable of generating a substantial impact on its community and beyond. These experiences and challenges have laid the foundation to draft a new Charter of Sustainable Commitments with courage and a heightened sense of responsibility for the next five years.

Setting forth the guidelines of UniPadova Sostenibile for 2023-2027, this document reiterates and confirms the cornerstones that directed the University over the past five years, offering in the first place a global perspective in terms of the environment and the well-being of others to address sustainability. Reconfirming its proactive commitment to social sustainability with actions that promote well-being, education, inclusion and equal opportunity, the University also emphasizes social justice issues to address the urgent challenges related to the consequences of recent crises across a growing international dimension. On the environmental front, the University aims to arrange actions of experimental initiatives and pilot projects already in place by developing and implementing strategies and programs to reduce energy consumption and gas emissions, as well as to reduce its impact on the environment and ecosystems on a broader scale. For this Charter to achieve the objectives of social change and ecological transition, investments must include an integrative impact monitoring system and decision-making models that support University policies that reflect the environmental, social and economic consequences of its choices for the next five years. The University aims to strengthen its network and to increase its involvement in actions needed to shift the production and sharing of innovation thanks to its use of best practices.

Community and Organizational Dimensions

The origins of the UniPadova Sostenibile project included the involvement of the entire local and academic communities, comprised of an ever-growing University that now includes over 70,000 people, in a city of 210,000 inhabitants. The first five years of the project concentrated on a culture of values and organizational models oriented towards sustainability. Affirming its role in the transition towards sustainable development models, the University witnessed the contributions of the entire community, including students, researchers, technical and administrative staff, professors, Alumni, and the vital inclusion of local institutions and businesses.

The University communicated its support and promotion of sustainability awareness through the creation of a dedicated UniPadova Sostenibile website and an interconnected Instagram page. Coordinated and promoted by the Involvement and Sustainability Sector of the Public Engagement Office, the UniPadova Sostenibile project now includes an Energy Sustainability Sector. Launched within the Facility and Energy Management Office, the new sector offers concrete and effective actions to contain energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The results achieved through the implementation of the University's first Sustainability Commitments Charter and subsequent editions are the result of the collaborative work of many offices within all areas of the Central Administration. Governed by the University through its Strategic Plan and the Performance Plan, the implementation of sustainability policies and objectives must include more involvement from Departments and other University structures. The coordination of sustainability policies within such a complex body is also thanks to the establishment of a Vice-Rector dedicated to sustainability, a new figure introduced as part of the current rectorship who took office in 2021.

Objective tools for monitoring and regular reporting have, and will continue to support planning tools by drafting sustainability reports based on international standards. These reports offer a transparent dialogue to share information and an understanding of its performance with stakeholders. Reports also allow the University to participate in international rankings, which foresee an increasingly attentive measurement of sustainable development across all universities.

Course of Action

Increase the University's impact on issues related to sustainability

The University promotes social change by assuming the perspective and declinations of sustainability across all levels and areas of its institutional mission

To promote a culture of sustainability within the university community, society, public entities, and private businesses.

To develop and implement sustainable development within educational, training, research, social, economic, and cultural actions.

To carry out and support initiatives that favour the transfer of best practices that encourage innovation and the development of entrepreneurship in sustainable fields.

To place value on the actions undertaken and verify models that measure their impact.

Reduce inequalities and promote well-being

The University is committed to placing people at the centre of its work by ensuring a culture of inclusion, equity, social justice, and respect by placing value on the differences of others through policies, projects, and actions within the community

To remove cultural, economic, organisational, and physical barriers that prevent equal participation of all social components in every area of academic life.

To promote well-being through the implementation of projects and services that protect equal opportunities, physical and mental health, life-study/work balance and the economic and financial sustainability of the university community.

To consolidate the University's role as a source and living lab for social innovation through the development of high-impact projects at a local, national, and international level that is capable of intercepting the evolving needs of an increasingly complex society.

Reduce the University's Environmental Impact and promote green transition

The University is committed to improving its infrastructures and processes by optimising the management of natural resources and protecting the environment in which it operates. By developing innovative solutions and best practices, the University aims to initiate processes that transform the field of environmental sustainability

To raise awareness, educate and interact with the local and academic communities by implementing best practices and concrete definitions of environmentally responsible behaviours, habits, and lifestyles.

To promote improved management of resources and waste through the reuse and recycling of products in a circular economy according to procurement best practices

To reduce the environmental footprint of the University and its community with improved use and production of energy from renewable sources, ensuring the efficiency of infrastructures and processes, and promoting sustainable mobility.

To develop and adopt decision-making models based on scientific measures and approaches that support better choices and guide the University towards improved sustainability practices.

To develop and share strategies towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and to curb the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems over the short and long term.

Enhance, engage, and innovate

The University aims to stimulate dialogue and to share objectives with internal and external communities through broad participation in issues related to sustainability. The goal is to maximize the impact and scope of actions related to sustainability objectives

To enhance the image of the "Sustainable UniPadova" project and expand the engagement of the academic and local communities across a wider context by encouraging greater coordination, interaction, and exchange both within the University and other institutions.

To heighten the University's role as a reference point for universities on environmental sustainability issues and increase its participation within national and international networks and platforms based on the development and implementation of sustainable development models.

To merge partnerships between the public and private sectors in terms of developing best practices and new tools for administrative, managerial, economic, and social fields aimed at sustainable development.

To strengthen and arrange sustainable friendly activities and projects that are quantifiable and communicable for academic rankings.

To stimulate engagement through the local territory with original lines of action that offer a significant contribution to the scientific, technical, social, and political debate on sustainability.

Areas and Actions

Resources

Responsible management of resources based on availability, and economic and environmental impact by preventing waste and promoting the reduction of consumption

- **Green Public Procurement:** adopting the Minimum Environmental Criteria (CAM in Italian) for all University purchases; developing innovative regulations for the selection of products, services, and suppliers; promoting circular economy processes; creating an assessment of the impacts of GPP - Green Public Procurement in the supply chain.
 - **Optimisation of supply services:** balancing the need to reduce the impact of products and services on the environment and people against maintaining compliance in the standardisation of quality and service; verifying product conformity.
 - **Dematerialisation and reducing disposable product usage:** strengthening of the dematerialization processes and the computerisation of services; extending the digital lifespan of systems; purchasing recyclable-based products and materials.
 - **Recycle and reuse:** encourage reusing and recycling at all levels based on a circular economy; refurbishing IT equipment, improving the management of decommissioned materials; improving the exchange of goods between facilities and the student community as well as between the University and other public bodies.
 - **Waste management:** raising awareness and educating the university community; strengthening waste sorting in all structures by implementing a system that monitors and analysis waste production; extending special waste collection.
 - **Responsible management of assets and urban space:** use of compatible procedures and sustainability criteria in the management of university assets (use and maintenance of space and resources); adopting sustainable building criteria and urban regeneration projects; Adoption of ESG (environmental, social and governance) criteria for financial choices when selecting banking and insurance operators.
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Environment and Energy

Monitoring and ensuring efficient energy, soil and water consumption at the University. Raising awareness on climate change issues. Reducing the University's environmental footprint through technological, managerial and behavioural actions

- **Reducing and producing electricity:** improving the production of electricity from renewable sources (photovoltaic, geothermal, etc); replacing light sources with LED technology along indoor and outdoor spaces.
 - **Monitoring and management systems:** monitoring of electricity and heat consumption and IEQ (Indoor Environmental Quality) parameters in offices, laboratories and classrooms; performance and energy optimization of building automation and management systems; monitoring and improving energy consumption and the efficiency of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) server rooms and equipment.
 - **Water management:** defining protocols for saving, recovering and reusing water in structures, green spaces, and laboratories; application of phytoremediation and water recovery techniques; promoting water consumption agreements with managing bodies.
 - **Green area enhancement:** responding to the Census survey for the management and use of green areas, supporting the organization of outdoor services and events; quantifying and enhancing ecosystem services.
 - **Carbon Footprint:** monitoring, certifying and creating annual carbon footprint reports; developing and implementing decarbonisation programs compatible with the EU Fit for 55 plan and promoting plans for carbon neutrality.
 - **Environmental Footprint:** analysing the University's environmental footprint (including Carbon, Water, Air, Resources, Land Use, and Toxicity Footprint) on the environment and ecosystems.
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Mobility and Transport

Raising awareness on mobility and transport issues. Promotion of sustainable mobility projects in collaboration with institutions and service providers, and mapping transportation modes of the University community

- **Raising awareness on sustainable mobility issues:** organization of awareness-raising, informative and participatory events for employees and students; promoting a culture of road safety.
- **Promoting low-impact transportation systems:** subsidies that support low-impact transportation (micro and macro modelling approaches); improving the safety and accessibility of cycling routes and promoting active mobility as a means to improve health and physical well-being; actions that support the use of shared electric vehicles.
- **Promoting agreements for sustainable and inclusive mobility:** actions aimed at increasing the use of public and shared transportation; maintaining, strengthening and expanding agreements with local companies and businesses
- **Home-University travel:** implementing a permanent monitoring system for the mobility and parking dynamics of employees and students; data analysis and drafting of home-work travel plans

Well-being and equal opportunities

Promotion of actions aimed at improving the health and well-being of the University community, promoting work-life balance, improving working conditions, promoting gender equality

- **Strengthening of services to support the physical and psychological well-being** of students; promoting physical activity, and both competitive and non-competitive sports for the entire academic community.
 - **Improving well-being actions and services to support work-life balance** and the enhancement of existing services and projects that promote the psychological and physical health of employees.
 - **Promotion of a culture of well-being** in the community through projects and initiatives that focus on healthy and sustainable lifestyles.
 - **Promotion of inclusiveness and equal opportunities:** implementing and monitoring actions outlined in the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) and the Plan of Positive Actions (PPA).
 - **Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R):** implementing and monitoring the Action Plan of the HRS4R accreditation to improve the working conditions of researchers at the University.
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Inclusion and social justice

Promotion of an inclusive culture and providing services, resources, environments and infrastructures that guarantee accessibility for all. Reject all forms of discrimination and guarantee respect for personal rights

- **Accessibility of services and their application:** using an inclusive language; revision of institutional websites and services according to the standards of inclusiveness and accessibility; implementation of technical assistance to promote inclusion.
 - **Environment Accessibility:** monitoring, planning and reducing barriers of an architectural, perceptual, and physical mobility nature; monitoring comfort in building environments.
 - **Strengthening of the University ICT infrastructure:** support of service accessibility and distribution on various devices; create inclusive physical and virtual areas for meetings and exchanges; implement tools for monitoring the accessibility of buildings, services, contents, and applications.
 - **Raising awareness and offering training actions,** to promote an inclusive and sustainable culture, expand the number of teachers, tutors, and students to participate and promote innovative projects.
 - **Strengthen services** for the international student community, with particular attention to students from countries at risk, also in collaboration with assistance and support networks, associations, institutions, and local bodies.
 - **Support and encourage participation in university life:** facilitated use of health services; increase in housing dedicated to the student population; increase financial support for the right to study; improvement of the environmental quality of the classrooms and common areas.
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Education and training

Promote and disseminate academic programs related to sustainability. Carrying out educational actions open to the local community by informing and creating awareness. Developing a culture of lifelong learning and employability for all students.

- **Promoting a culture of sustainability** among University employees about resources, energy, the environment, climate change, inclusion, and human rights by organizing awareness-raising events and accredited training opportunities.
 - **Specific educational actions:** implementation of behavioural guidelines to improve environmental impact; creation of short videos in English to bridge the cultural gap of international students on environmental sustainability issues; promote the use of dedicated apps.
 - **Lifelong learning and training actions on sustainability issues:** establishment of courses and MOOCs dedicated to sustainability for students and those ready to join the professional marketplace; introduction of sustainability in the lifelong learning and training of teachers and university professors
 - **Charting and promoting academic programs dedicated to sustainability:** individual courses, undergraduate, master's, graduate, and research doctorates. Including workshops, modules or teachings dedicated to sustainability contextualised in the various disciplines within each study programme.
 - **Lesson Zero:** creation and dissemination of a transversal course on the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), available to the entire academic community and beyond, to promote widespread literacy on sustainability issues, creating and disseminating lessons and courses on specific topics.
 - **Dissemination of sustainability issues** aim at the public, various communities, and specific groups of people, through shared agreements and projects with public and private organizations and institutions.
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Cross-cutting fields

National and international networks

- To actively participate in national and international networks. National networks include RUS – The Italian University Network for Sustainable Development and ASviS – The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development; and reinforce its participation in international networks such as the GGKP – Green Growth Knowledge Partnership and The United Nations Global Compact.
- To continue participating and contributing towards international actions and education programs on environmental and social issues, such as the United Nations Environment Programme.
- To follow newly formed networks on the topics of sustainability and well-being at will.
- To follow international action programs for the decarbonisation of the University's activities in line with initiatives such as Science Based Targets and Climate Neutral Now launched by the UNFCCC.
- To participate and coordinate with international university networks on actions related to sustainability issues including the European University Association, Coimbra Group, Venice International University, and the ARQUS European University Alliance.
- To develop multilateral agreements in the field of sustainability issues with institutions and entities at local, national, and international levels.

Research

- To revise University information systems by taking into consideration the Census, research reports, and Third Mission activities for the development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research in the area of sustainability.
- To enhance the activities of departments, University centres, interdepartmental centres, study centres, and individual researchers engaged in sustainability issues; to strengthen collaborations with national and international research centres and communities engaged in sustainability issues.
- To present seminars on the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), to promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research training based on the global challenges posed by the United Nations 17 SDGs.
- To create and monitor networks of local and national stakeholders on issues related to sustainability (companies, public bodies and administrations, agencies, and the third sector...)

The Third Mission and Best Practices

- To enhance academic entrepreneurship in the field of sustainability by supporting and giving visibility to spin-offs related to the environmental or social field and creating new opportunities for economic and job growth.
- To promote and share best practices implemented by the University in the environmental, social, cultural and economic fields in coordination with local entities; to participate in working groups, foundations and associations across national and international networks.
- To organise the advocacy of initiatives concerning environmental sustainability and integrated ecology issues aimed at the academic community and the public; to strengthen the University's collaborative planning role with local, national and international institutions and bodies.
- To organise challenges, contests and prizes for the academic community in the development of solutions to environmental, social and economic challenges.
- To enhance the role of heritage, art, culture, literature, museums and historical parks of the University in the development of the community, through initiatives aimed at promoting places of culture as spaces of inclusion that stimulate good health and well-being as reflections/ actions on environmental issues.
- To integrate the role of university museums and libraries in local development that favour relationships with schools and various bodies operating in the cultural and social field; to implement usable digital resources related to the historic, artistic and cultural heritage of the University.

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- Communication**
- To promote University initiatives and actions on the subject of sustainability both in the academic and local communities through press releases, institutional mailings, bilingual website (www.sostenibile.unipd.it) and on Instagram @UniPadovaSostenibile.
 - To promote the University as a scientifically correct, reliable and documented source of information on issues related to sustainable development by promoting published research results with the media over various modes of scientific communication and public engagement.
 - To encourage and increase awareness and the involvement of the academic community, specifically students, in community engagement activities and initiatives dedicated to environmental and social sustainability through the digital communication channels of "UniPadova Sostenibile".
 - To participate in national and international awareness campaigns, such as the "M'illumino di meno" campaign and the Sustainable Development Festival.
 - To prepare a calendar of events on sustainability and to participate in events organized by national and international networks.
 - To develop a sustainable and certifiable model for organizing events in line with the University's sustainability policies.

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- Monitoring and reporting**
- To measure and monitor energy consumption, waste production, and greenhouse gas emissions for the assessment of environmental and economic sustainability to continually improve the University's performance.
 - To monitor the University's performance in international sustainability rankings, compare them across the academic landscape, and assess the effectiveness of policies.
 - To publish Sustainability Reports, Financial Reports, Gender Equality Reports, and Social Balance Sheets regularly so that processes of change are transparent, and as a means to evaluate their impact.
 - To develop a multi-criteria decision-making model to support the sustainability of the University's choices based on results from the reports mentioned above.

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