



University of Copenhagen

United Nations Global Compact - Communication on Engagement

2. June 2021

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1. An introduction by Rector Henrik C. Wegener

Climate change, resource scarcity, pollution, inequality, and health issues are just some of the global challenges we must combat as a society. The time perspective for these challenges goes far beyond a single generation and in order to meet them, new knowledge is needed. We must gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between the development of human societies and its interaction with the environment in which we live.

A sustainable transformation of our society necessitates a mix of cultural, ethical, political, social, legal, economic, technological, and natural science elements. The University of Copenhagen represents all of these research areas and disciplines. We believe that our comprehensiveness and ability to collaborate across disciplines provides the best possible basis for facilitating and catalysing a transformation, which supports a sustainable development of society.

The management of the current COVID-19 pandemic is a brilliant showcase of the impact of research and of universities. It shows that it has a royal return on investment if the universities maintain a diverse contingency of independent research that few deem relevant at any given time – but global development can make crucial almost overnight. It also shows that a good interface between scientists and decision-makers in Government and industry provides the best stewardship in times of trouble such as the year 2020, which posed challenges on all of us.

When Professor of virology Allan Randrup at the University of Copenhagen was asked by the Danish media, “What is the most neglected threat to our society?” his response was not the COVID-19 pandemic, but rather the climate crisis. In addition, 700 Danish Researchers has signed an open letter to the Danish Government, encouraging them to act with the same sense of urgency in response to the climate crisis that it has acted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I think it would be safe to say that this ‘sense of climate urgency’ – or emergency – would not have reached public disclosure in the first place without the young – our students – who are both the canary in the coal mine and chief entrepreneurs in this transformation of our society and of our mind-sets. As it happens, major changes in society cannot only be steered “top down”, but relies heavily on “bottom-up” initiatives.

We recognize that one of the University of Copenhagen’s most important contributions to society comes in the form of our graduates. We believes it is critical that all our graduates are knowledgeable about the sustainable development challenges with which contemporary society is confronted and have considered how they, themselves, both in their private and professional lives, can contribute to addressing these challenges.

In 2020, we introduced a sustainability vision to further explicate that we take our purpose in society seriously. We wish to help solve the challenges facing society and secure a sustainable future through our research and education, through our engagements with our stakeholders as well as through our own institutional operations.

Yours sincerely,



Henrik C. Wegener

Rector of the University of Copenhagen, Professor, MSc, MPA, PhD

2. A statement of continued support by Katherine Richardson

In the fall of 2018, the University of Copenhagen committed to support the ten principles of the United Nations Global Compact with respect to human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. As part of our commitment, we also pledged to participate in and engage with the United Nations Global Compact by conducting applied research and thought leadership to advance best practices and to educate a variety of audiences about sustainability.

We have been engaged in the sustainability agenda for many years and have a strong foundation to build upon. With our Communication on Engagement, I am pleased to reconfirm that the University of Copenhagen supports the ten principles of the UN Global Compact and the advancement of these.

The University of Copenhagen was widely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 and we struggled through unseen territory like the rest of the world. All academic and administrative staff and not least our students made a huge collaborative effort to see the University safely through this extraordinary situation. Despite many resources being directed at mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not neglect our commitment to support a sustainable development in society.

In this report, our first Communication on Engagement submitted to the United Nations Global Compact, we provide an account of how we work with sustainability through our research and education, through our engagements with our surroundings as well as through our own institutional operations. We introduce to you the highlights of our actions and results in the period 1. January 2020 to 31. December 2020.

Yours sincerely,



Katherine Richardson

Leader of the Sustainability Science Centre at the University of Copenhagen, Professor, MSc, PhD, DSc

3. Sustainability at the University of Copenhagen – actions and results

The global societal challenges with sustainability-related issues need to be resolved, and the active engagement of universities is crucial. The University of Copenhagen takes co-responsibility for sustainable development – both internally and externally.

At the University of Copenhagen, we have engaged in the sustainability agenda for many years. Every year new research centres at faculty-level or cross-disciplinary initiatives emerge. What we all have in common is that we strive to help solve the challenges facing society and secure a sustainable future for all of us.

3.1. Sustainability vision

In 2020, we introduced a sustainability vision to make clear, that we take our purpose in society seriously. Our vision focuses on our key contribution to a sustainable society, which are research and education, our engagements with our surroundings as well as our own institutional operations.

We equip students to solve tomorrow's problems today

We offer degree programmes at the highest academic level. All students have the opportunity to acquire analytical insight, academic skills and knowledge about how they can use their expertise to contribute to sustainable development. We provide the framework that will enable students across disciplines to use their academic skills in practice.

We prioritise research that contributes to the sustainable development of society

Researchers at the University of Copenhagen have a high level of core expertise, which gives them the best possible basis for collaborating across disciplines to address societal challenges. This is necessary as complex problems cannot be identified and solved by individual disciplines alone. We ensure the organisational and financial framework for researchers to launch and develop research initiatives that may contribute to the sustainable development of society.

We support engagement with the surrounding world and communicate researchers' results to the benefit of the world

We ensure that researchers' academic activities and results are visible and accessible to everyone at the University and in society. We want to collaborate with society and to be known and recognised worldwide for our contribution to sustainable development.

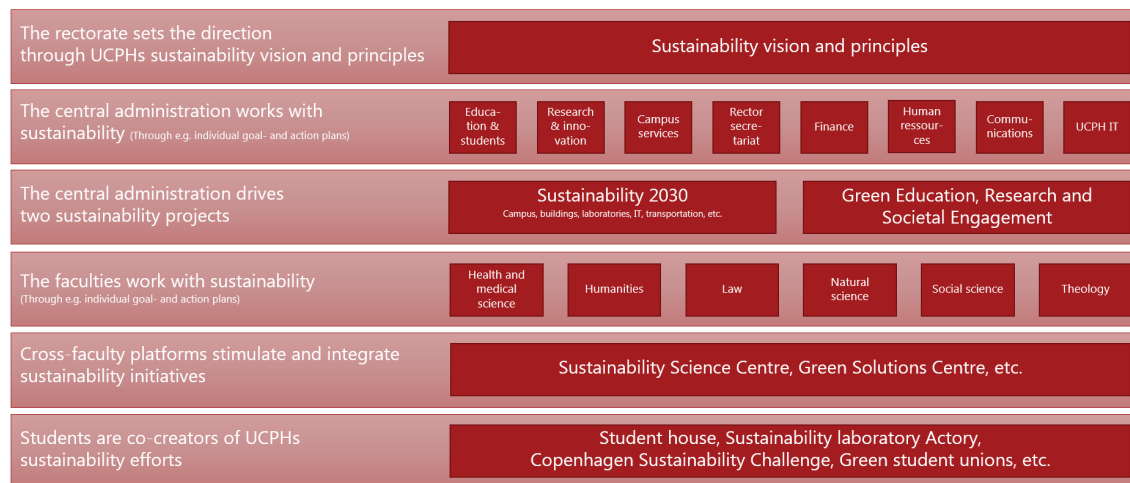
We lead the way – by example and by our actions

We have a responsibility to act on the sustainable agenda. It is the University's task to identify and create solutions to global problems together with other players. However, we also have an internal responsibility towards our staff, students and organisation. We aim to take the lead as a climate-friendly organisation and translate research into specific solutions that will promote sustainability at the University's campuses and in Copenhagen.

3.2. Sustainability approach

The University of Copenhagen recognizes that every single one of us must contribute to implement our sustainability vision and to reach our ambitious sustainability 2030 targets. In 2020, we put together a new team as part of the project 'Green education, research and societal engagement'. The team's main objective is to implement our sustainability vision and engage colleagues across faculties, departments and the central administration as well as our students to advance the University's sustainability activities and performance.

Below is an overview of all the different players that contribute to sustainable development at the University of Copenhagen.



3.2.1. Education

The University of Copenhagen recognizes that one of its most important contributions to society comes in the form of its graduates. We believe that it is critical that all our graduates are knowledgeable about the sustainable development challenges with which contemporary society is confronted and have considered how they, themselves, both in their private and professional lives, can contribute to addressing these challenges.

Sustainable development is a component in many of the courses taught at UCPH, and there is an increasing interest in sustainability among students.

Highlights of the year:

- All Bachelor and Masters courses offered at the University, that are relevant for addressing sustainability challenges are mapped and plotted against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This mapping was first carried out in 2017 and is updated yearly. Find more information at <https://sustainability.ku.dk/studies/study-sustainability/>.
- An intensive week-long summer school course for professionals on Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals was offered in August for the third consecutive year.
- A new Massive Open On-line Course (MOOC) was launched - Transforming the Global Food System. This MOOC joins six other MOOCs offered by the University and relevant for sustainable development. Find more information at <https://sustainability.ku.dk/studies/mooc/>.
- For the fourth year in a row, we offered two elective courses at the Masters Level - Sustainability Challenges 1 and 2. The courses draw upon the competences of researchers from the University

of Copenhagen, The Technical University of Denmark (DTU), and Copenhagen Business School (CBS). The philosophy behind these courses is that none of these institutions on their own is equipped to educate sustainability professionals. By pooling teaching resources from the three universities, it is possible to give students a background in the environmental sustainability challenges, the role of metrics and technologies in addressing these challenges, and how business and supply chains can be adapted to accommodate sustainability considerations. The courses are hosted by CBS and attract students from all three, as well as other, universities. Find more information at <https://sustainability.ku.dk/studies/education/msc-sustainability/>.

- The Stimulus student workshops were held for the third consecutive year in a row. The workshops focus on interdisciplinary and debate between committed students who participate across faculties and subjects.
- The University of Copenhagen supports educational activities focusing on sustainability and in 2020, we decided to fund 10 new or existing courses with a total of 500.000 DKK. the following year, as part of the project 'Green education, research and societal engagement'.

3.2.2. Research

Much of the research carried out at the University of Copenhagen can contribute to increased knowledge about sustainability challenges and about how to address them as the global community strives to achieve a more sustainable development trajectory.

In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, research supporting sustainable development necessitates collaboration that transgress traditional academic borders. The University of Copenhagen has a strong focus on developing new approaches to research in order to encourage collaborations both within and outside of the academic sphere.

Highlights of the year:

- Many research activities at the University relate to questions of sustainable development. The University is encouraging that researchers think and promote their research in terms of its potential contribution to transformation within the six societal entry points identified in the 2019 UN Global Sustainable Development Report. UCPH has revamped its web presentation of Agenda 2030 relevant research in order to align it to the entry points and levers identified in the report during 2020. Find more information at <https://sustainability.ku.dk/research/>.
- The video series "Potentials" was launched in the autumn of 2020. The series highlight researchers from all faculties at the University of Copenhagen, whose work strengthens the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ever since the University of Copenhagen was founded in 1479, the University has celebrated its foundation with an annual commemoration. In 2020, we introduced a new interdisciplinary climate and sustainability award at this occasion. Find more information at <https://aarsfest.ku.dk/prisopgaver/>.
- The University supports interdisciplinary research within sustainability and in 2020, we decided to support 10 interdisciplinary research networks with a total of 4.000.000 DKK. the following year, as part of the project 'Green education, research and societal engagement'.
- In ultimo 2020, the idea of a Green Solutions Centre was formed. The Green Solutions Centre is a platform from which researcher from different disciplines can join forces in helping solve some of the challenges facing society.

3.2.3. Engagement

A good interface between scientists and decision-makers in Government and industry provides the best stewardship in times of trouble such as demonstrated during the year 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic at its highest. At the University of Copenhagen, we engage with our community in many different ways be it through interactions with civil servants, politicians, industry or other universities.

Highlights of the year:

- The University has continued its popular public Sustainability Lecture Series where Danish and international speakers address issues relevant to Agenda 2030. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these lectures were delivered in the form of webinars. The entire series is recorded and available at <https://sustainability.ku.dk/lectures-congresses/previous/>.
- In addition to the English language lecture series, the University offered six Danish language evening seminars addressing various societal challenges relevant to achieving the SDGs in the series "Jorden Kalder" (the Earth is calling) and a subsequent podcast series.
- In 2020, we produced a short film describing the University's dedication to providing an understanding of sustainability challenges among its students. The film has been used at numerous public events.
- In collaboration with the IARU alliance, the University of Copenhagen contributed to the session "How to solve the Climate Emergency" together with Berkeley professor Daniel Kammen at the 2020 Global University Climate Forum.
- The University of Copenhagen is a member of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Professor Katherine Richardson co-chairs the Nordic node.

3.2.4. Institution

Researchers and students at the University of Copenhagen develop knowledge and solutions to the sustainability challenges society is facing. As a university, we have a responsibility to put this knowledge into action, for example through a sustainable transition of our institution.

Green Campus strategies have led our work since 2008 and we have reported on the progress in our yearly Green Account. Initiatives under the latest strategy 'Green Campus 2020' resulted in a 71% reduction in carbon emissions pr. FTE from 2006-2020, which overshot our ambition of a 65% reduction.

We have previously focused on reducing the energy consumption and carbon footprint from direct emissions. In 2020, the University of Copenhagen initiated the development of new targets and a more ambitious framework including emissions from the entire life cycle of products used at the university. The process ran throughout 2020 with inclusion of students and employees.

In December 2020, the university board approved a new strategy for the University of Copenhagen – 'Sustainable Institution 2030'. The framework builds upon an estimate of the university's overall footprint conducted in 2019. The estimate highlights the necessity of considering the carbon footprint in a broader perspective and include lifecycle emissions from products and services (Scope 3).

The new sustainable institution strategy contains six main themes with specific goals that together strive to turn the university into a more sustainable institution – www.sustainability2030.ku.dk.



The main themes are:

1. Climate

- Reduce our overall climate footprint per full-time equivalent (FTE) by 50% in 2030

2. Resources and recycling

- Sustainable procurement - use and recycle resources in the entire value chain that contribute to a significant reduction of our resource consumption
- Ensure recycling of 60% waste
- Reduce total quantities for incineration and landfills by 50% per FTE

3. Chemistry

- Prioritise products and solutions without health and environmental contaminants in procurement, operations and construction
- Reduce the use of environmentally and health hazardous substances in teaching and research

4. Biodiversity

- In 2021, examine the areas in which our activities have the greatest impact on biodiversity and, on this basis, develop specific goals, targets, initiatives and actions for UCPH as an institution

5. Involvement, participation and behaviour

- All staff and students are to be offered good opportunities and be motivated to practice sustainable behaviour in their day-to-day life at the university
- All staff and students must have the opportunity to engage in specific initiatives and actions aimed at the development of a more sustainable university

6. Collaboration and global knowledge sharing

- Engage nationally and globally in the sustainable work for universities to achieve the best solutions and share own experiences
- Continue to be internationally recognised for our sustainability activities and results

Each theme contains concrete goals that we will strive to achieve following four general principles:

- **Ambitious** – Find the way and walk the talk!
- **Research-based** - holistic and lifecycle-based data
- **Behaviour, participation and co-creation** – staff and students
- **Campus as a living lab** – explore solutions within the frames of the university

The principles highlight a strong intention to draw on the resources that a knowledge-based institution possesses through inclusion of students, researchers and non-academic staff alike.

Highlights of the year

In order to achieve our goals, we are in the process of developing actions under eight overall action areas – four general (1-4) and four transverse (5-8). We employed some actions in 2020.

1. Campus, buildings and operations

- Concerns actions in relation to the operation, maintenance and buildings at the university including e.g. building materials, canteens and food and energy efficiency projects. A range of energy efficiency measures and projects has been executed. Space efficiency and sustainability has been incorporated in the campus master plan and will be implemented via the individual campus plans. Other 2020 initiatives included a vegetarian Wednesday at certain campuses and sustainability in the catering contracts.

2. Laboratories

- Concerns efforts on reducing emissions from work in laboratories including energy consumption from equipment and sustainable procurement. In 2020, several local initiatives emerged including Green Groups in research labs.

3. IT

- Concerns emissions from operation, purchase and disposal of IT-equipment. In 2020, a designated person in the IT-department was assigned to assure concurrent attention. We also initiated an investigation into possible sharing and recycling solutions.

4. Transport

- Concerns emissions from transport in relation to activities at the University of Copenhagen. We focus on air travel, which in 2019 accounted for 93% of the emissions from transport. In 2020, recommendations on how to reduce the climate impact of travelling was included in the university's travel policy.

5. Sustainable procurement

- In order to reduce our overall climate impact it is necessary to ensure sustainable procurement activities. In 2020, work was initiated that will ensure incorporation of sustainability in the procurement categories and supply contracts.

6. Waste sorting and recycling

- The lifecycle perspective entails sustainable disposal, including increased reuse and recycling. In 2020, we initiated a project to ensure waste sorting across all departments.

7. Sustainable behaviour - departments, staff and students

- Concerns the involvement of employees and students in realising our objectives. This includes development of data and key indicators for all departments in order to inspire and monitor local initiatives as well as the establishment of a number of sustainability working groups at faculty and departmental level. In addition, we made available Green Advice for both employees and students on the intranet.

8. Communication

- Concerns internal and external communication and branding. In 2020, communication included distribution of newsletters and active communication via social media.

Altogether, the University of Copenhagen looks into fast-moving initiatives and actions throughout 2021 and towards 2030 in order to achieve our ambitious goals for a sustainable institution by 2030.