



**UNIVERZITA
KARLOVA**

**Charles University
Sustainable Development Strategy:
Towards Sustainability 2030**

1. Where We're Coming from: Sustainable Development and Charles University

Human society all around the globe is experiencing an increasing quality of life. At the same time, however, it is facing a number of unprecedented challenges related to eliminating and mitigating the negative effects of its current mode of operation, which directly or indirectly affect our standard of living and may significantly reduce it in the near future (e.g., the climate crisis, loss of biodiversity and land degradation as well as related challenges such as food security or increased migration, etc.). **The effort to find a balance** between a “development which preserves the ability of present and future generations to meet their basic needs and, at the same time, does not reduce the diversity of nature as well as preserves the natural functions of ecosystems” is known (and enacted in the Czech Republic¹) as **‘sustainable development.’** It symbolizes a path to a future reality—sustainability—in which economic and social progress are reconciled and environmental degradation is eliminated.

Charles University (hereinafter referred to as ‘CU’) **is aware of these challenges and of its social responsibility** and wants to contribute to their solution through its internal and external activities, thus leading society by example. Accordingly, it recognizes and subscribes to several major **international, national and institutional strategies, commitments, and values in the field of sustainable development (Table 1).**

In the global context, this primarily concerns the **UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, which represent the global development agenda for 2015–2030. All UN Member States, representatives from the ranks of civil society, the business sector, and academia as well as citizens from all continents have contributed to the formulation of the SDGs and their specific sub-objectives and indicators. The Sustainable Development Agenda, which encompasses the environmental, social, and economic aspects of society’s development, was officially endorsed by the UN Summit on 25 September 2015 in New York.

Table 1. *International, national and institutional documents the Strategy builds on.*

Name	Content/relation to the Strategy
National and international documents	
UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—UN Agenda 2030	The goals form the basic framework of this Strategy, which uses the sub-objectives of the SDGs relevant to the university environment.
European Green Deal	The deal presents the European Commission’s roadmap for moving towards carbon neutrality, protecting biodiversity, conserving natural resources, and reducing pollution by 2050.
Strategic Framework of the Czech Republic 2030	The framework sets out priorities for the development of the Czech Republic by 2030, taking into account SDGs.
CU’s institutional documents	
CU Strategic Plan 2021–2025	The plan defines key areas for the development of CU before 2025.
CU Responsible Procurement Strategy	The strategy defines CU’s objectives and priorities in public procurement, using the principles of responsible procurement.
CU Equal Opportunities Plan 2022–2024	The plan focuses on the personnel and institutional capacity-building of the equal opportunities agenda at the university level, more balanced gender representation, workplace culture, career development, equal pay, etc.
CU HR Awards Action Plan	The plan deals with improving the quality of human resources management, developing professional growth, creating conditions for making research careers more appealing, and development at the university.
CU Intersectoral Cooperation Strategy	The strategy focuses on connecting different areas of university research and their subsequent transfer to the application sphere. (In preparation)

¹ Section 6 of Act No. 17/1992 Coll. on Environment, as amended

CU Internationalization Strategy	The strategy sets, among other things, priorities in the area of university mobility. (In preparation)
Centralized development projects	
University Leaders in SDGs (UNILEAD)	The project defines recommendations for Czech public HEIs in relation to sustainable development, focusing on the implementation of the recommendations and on the involvement of students and staff.

2. Where We're Going: Charles University's Persistent Commitment to Sustainable Development

CU aims to mobilize its inner potential to transform itself into a sustainable university that can serve as an example for students and become a role model of social responsibility for other social actors. That is what led to the drafting up of the *Charles University Sustainable Development Strategy: Towards Sustainability 2030* (hereinafter referred to as the 'Strategy'), which aims, as its **main objective, to steer the university towards a sustainable mode of operation by taking a responsible approach not only to its operation but also to its educational and creative activities.** CU sees the changes that will be made in support of this effort as an opportunity to modernize itself and create a potential for innovation, which will be reflected mainly in its areas of expertise, i.e., research and higher education.

CU's Mission

CU's mission is to offer new insight and innovation through science and research and to provide a quality education that reflects the latest scientific findings and sufficiently prepares students for life in a changing world.

CU's Vision

CU is a leader in sustainable development among Central Europe universities:

- **CU integrates the principles of environmental, social and economic sustainability in its operations and activities,** i.e., the university is climate neutral, works on reducing its environmental footprint, ensures fair treatment and fulfillment of human needs in supply chains, behaves responsibly and participatively towards its employees and students using the resources available;
- **CU educates students to develop key competencies** to enhance their quality of life and meet the needs of present and future generations within the limits of the capacity of our planetary systems;
- **CU helps create solutions to global, regional and local challenges** through its scientific output, research and innovation, directly impacting practice;
- **CU fulfills its third role** and is a key part of the public debate on sustainability in the local and national frameworks as well as the civil and corporate sectors.

CU will deliver on its Vision by:

- **Using its capacities to achieve its objectives** in key areas of sustainable development;
- **Promoting sustainability management** across the university, including communication and raising awareness of sustainability among students and staff, **coordinating interdisciplinary collaboration,** encouraging personal as well as team initiative,

fostering bonds to the university, and strengthening the relationship between stakeholders and society-wide dialogue;

- **Involving students and staff** in the development of key university strategies and their implementation;
- **Reflecting the social needs of** all its employees and students as well as **creating equal opportunities for** employment at the university;
- **Conducting cutting-edge research on** sustainable development and **strengthening participation in university development and research projects** related to sustainable development;
- **Developing existing and initiating new involvement in national or international networks** concerned with sustainable development;
- **Educating students, staff and the general public** on sustainable development issues through study programs, lifelong learning programs, summer schools and other appropriate activities that lead to environmentally and socially responsible behavior;
- **Providing adequate financial resources** to meet the objectives of the Strategy, pursuing funding opportunities through projects, grants, and donations.

3. The Path We're Taking: Key Areas for the Development of Charles University

In pursuit of its Vision and Mission, CU will focus on four key areas of development, which reflect its core activities. Each of the key areas has its own objective and addresses several sub-areas of interest with individual sub-objectives. The Strategy's areas of interest, objectives, and sub-objectives are tailored to fit CU's purposes and are based on the latest scientific findings and the experience of the world's leading universities while reflecting international frameworks and standards. The individual themes of sustainable development overlap and complement one another, so the structure of the Strategy is partly fluid, with no fixed boundaries.

In order to achieve the set objectives of the Strategy, Action Plans will be drafted up for two years at a time, i.e., for 2023–2024, 2025–2026, 2027–2028, and 2029–2030. The Action Plans will present concrete measures for the implementation of the sub-objectives in the given two-year period, including specifications of the responsibilities of the actors involved, monitoring, and evaluations as well as financial backing. **The Action Plans will be evaluated annually, with the evaluations being published at the end of each two-year application period.**

By establishing an organizational and communication structure for sustainable development, the university will be able to receive feedback and react flexibly to changes in society and within the university as well as improve and align proposed practices. **The Strategy will be regularly updated**, with the next update expected in 2026. **The Strategy will be evaluated**, i.e., assessed as far as the fulfillment of the set objectives, **in the second half of 2030**. This is when the subsequent Strategy for 2031–2040 will be drafted up based on the current national and international state of things.

Key Area I. Management and Organization

Objective: effective management and organization of CU's operations in line with the principles of sustainable development

a. Sustainable development management

i. Cooperation, communication, and raising awareness within CU

Sub-objective: utilizing existing and newly created structures to ensure efficient communication and cooperation as well as raise awareness of sustainable development within CU, organizing awareness-raising activities in all Administration and Operation areas (Energy and emissions; Construction and reconstruction; Water, greenery, and ecosystem services; Waste and the circular economy; Mobility; Food services) in order to raise awareness and reduce any negative impact on the environment and society at the CU level

ii. Strategic documents and reporting on progress in sustainable development

Sub-objective: implementing the set measures, regularly monitoring CU's progress in the field of sustainable development, updating the Strategy every 5 years (max.), and evaluating the outcomes in 2023

iii. Consistency with other strategic documents

Sub-objective: ensuring that other CU strategic documents (that are either in preparation or regularly updated) are in line with the Strategy and that they take into account sustainable development where relevant

iv. Funding

Sub-objective: securing funding from verifiably ethical internal or external sources (EU projects and government programs, verified foundations and donors, etc.) to fund activities that will support sustainable development at CU, and seeking to reinvest any financial savings in the area of sustainable development to further support sustainable projects in the long term

b. Responsible purchasing

Sub-objective: applying the principles of responsible public procurement to CU's procurement and purchasing (this topic is addressed in CU's Responsible Procurement Strategy)

c. Equal opportunities, student and staff wellbeing

Sub-objective: ensuring equal opportunities and promoting the well-being of CU students and staff (this topic is addressed and other specific objectives are set out primarily in the CU Equal Opportunities Plan and other sub-documents)

⇒ **Indicators of the fulfillment of Key Area I by 2030:** a Sustainable Development Office² will be established at CU and led by the CU Sustainable Development Manager, who will be working together with other colleagues (min. 3 FTEs); each faculty and unit of CU will have a Sustainability Coordinator; internal working groups consisting of CU experts³ will be put together, covering 6 areas of administration and operation; a CU Sustainability Advisory Board consisting of CU staff and student representatives⁴ will be appointed; the Strategy Objectives, updated in 2026, will be assessed and a follow-up 2031–2040 Strategy will start being prepared; there will be an updated CU Responsible Procurement Strategy; there will be an updated CU Equal Opportunities Plan

Key Area II. Administration and Operation

Objective: reducing environmental footprint, achieving sustainable operation and management at CU, i.e., a socially and environmentally responsible approach to the university's activities

a. Energy and emissions

i. Energy management

Sub-objective: implementing energy management at CU as a whole

ii. Greenhouse gas emissions

Sub-objective: monitoring and reducing GHG emissions at CU (according to ISO 14064 or GHG Protocol), gradually achieving carbon neutrality – by 2050 at the latest

iii. IT infrastructure and computerization/digitization

² The equivalent of a "Sustainability Office" at foreign universities

³ The equivalent of "Sustainability Working Groups" at foreign universities

⁴ The equivalent of a "Sustainability Council/Committee" at foreign universities

Sub-objective: introduce IT infrastructure management and support computerization/digitalization at CU (reducing energy and paper consumption, etc.)

Note: Renewable energy sources at CU buildings are included in subchapter II. b. Construction and reconstruction.

b. Construction and reconstruction

i. Building reconstruction and construction

Sub-objective: taking environmental aspects into account in constructing new buildings and reconstructing existing buildings (reducing energy consumption, using renewable energy sources, engaging in passive and gradually also active construction in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, green roofs, preventing bird-window collisions, using secondary raw materials in construction and reconstruction, etc.), introducing certification according to the applicable standards

c. Water, greenery and ecosystem services (incl. biodiversity support)

i. Water management

Sub-objective: implementing water management at CU (potable, grey, and rainwater)

ii. Management of water areas, green areas and greenery

Sub-objective: introducing management of water areas, green areas and green spaces at CU to support ecosystem services (biodiversity support and restoration, stormwater retention, recreation and leisure services, community gardens)

iii. Inventory of impact on biodiversity and ecosystem services

Sub-objective: mapping out the impact of CU operations and purchases on biodiversity and ecosystem services at a global scale and designing effective interventions to reduce impact

d. Waste and the circular economy

i. Waste monitoring

Sub-objective: mapping out CU's waste streams

ii. Waste prevention, sorting and further processing

Sub-objective: managing waste in accordance with the principles of the circular economy, developing and streamlining the waste sorting system (including biodegradable waste of plant and animal origin), introducing waste prevention measures at CU

e. Mobility

i. Business and study trips (especially abroad)

Sub-objective: setting up measures to reduce the environmental footprint of business and study travel of CU staff and students, especially when traveling longer distances

ii. School/work commute

Sub-objective: setting up measures to encourage the use of more environmentally friendly modes of transport for travel to school or work by CU students and staff

iii. Vehicle fleet and infrastructure

Sub-objective: greening the CU vehicle fleet, gradually transitioning to clean mobility (low or zero emission forms of transport), supporting infrastructure for clean mobility at CU

f. Food services

i. Sustainable⁵ foods and menus

Sub-objective: offering sustainable food services to CU students and staff (at CU as well as subcontracted facilities: refectories, cafeterias, buffets, vending machines, kitchenettes, shared spaces, etc.), gradually reducing the environmental footprint of CU's food services

Note: purchasing raw materials from sustainable sources for CU food service facilities is part of I. b. Responsible purchasing; Prevention and management of CU food waste is part of II. d. Waste and the circular economy.

⇒ **Indicators of the fulfilment of Key Area II by 2030:** GHG emissions monitoring (according to ISO 14064 or GHG Protocol) will be implemented and steps will be taken to achieve CU's carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest (specific commitments to continuous GHG emissions reduction will be incorporated into the Strategy during the update in 2026); the environmental footprint of CU as an organization will be calculated and published according to the European Commission Recommendation (on the use of the Environmental Footprint methods to measure and communicate the life cycle environmental performance of products and organizations, dated 16. 12. 2021), or sustainability reporting according to the emerging legislation (ESRS⁶); certification will be introduced for construction projects according to existing standards (e.g., LEED); water management will be introduced; management of water areas, green areas and greenery will be introduced to support and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services; the impact of CU's operations and purchases on biodiversity and ecosystem services will be mapped out; CU's waste streams will be mapped out; monitoring of the environmental footprint of student and staff mobility for study or business travel will be introduced; monitoring of the environmental footprint of food services provided by CU will be introduced; the environmental (carbon) footprint of all the above mentioned areas of operations will be publicly available and a plan with specific targets for the continuous reduction of the footprint (based on an assessment of CU's potential for reduction using certain financial resources) will be in place; the plan and targets will be regularly evaluated and updated based on national and international commitments

Key Area III. Education, science and research

Objective: strengthening the position of sustainable development in education, science and research

a. Educational activities

⁵ 'Sustainable' in a holistic sense, i.e., accessible and nutritionally valuable to consumers, while being environmentally friendly and respecting the needs of the people who produce or prepare the food and menus

⁶ European Sustainability Reporting Standards – using the new ESG concept (see below)

Sub-objective: integrating sustainable development and its sub-topics into CU's course offerings, degree programs, lifelong learning programs and educational activities (e.g., compulsory and elective courses, lifelong learning courses on sustainable development/ESG/CSR topics,⁷ educational and awareness-raising activities of associations, etc.)

b. Creative activities

Sub-objective: supporting research, development and innovation in the area of sustainable development at Charles University (basic and applied research projects, student theses supervision, publishing activities, etc.)

⇒ **Indicators of the fulfilment of Key Area III by 2030:** *the curricula and courses taught at CU will be reviewed and their relationship to sustainable development will be assessed; at least 3 new courses will be created that address aspects of sustainable development not covered by any existing courses (compulsory, elective, lifelong learning or microcredentials); research activities focusing on sustainable development will be supported through internal funding (at least 10 projects)*

Key Area IV. Third role and external cooperation

Objective: contributing to current societal developments and disseminating the latest scientific findings and values in the field of sustainable development, including the application of results in practice

a. The third role of CU

Sub-objective: popularizing science and research in the field of sustainable development at the Charles University

b. External cooperation and communication (strategic partnerships)

Sub-objective: CU's cooperation in the field of sustainable development with other universities and sustainable development actors⁸ in the Czech Republic and abroad

⇒ **Indicators of the fulfilment of Key Area IV by 2030:** *CU will regularly inform the public about its activities in the field of sustainable development through the media (min. 30 media outputs); CU will engage in at least 5 major events that will promote aspects of sustainable development to the public (e.g., workshops, exhibitions, public lectures, researchers' night, etc.); CU will engage in public debate and cooperation with sustainable development actors in the Czech Republic and abroad (CU will be involved in min. 4 national and international networks or expert groups); CU will support the application of results in practice (min. 10 results used in the public or private sector); CU will share experience gained from the implementation of measures supporting sustainable development (min. 10 contributions through publicly accessible electronic media)*

⁷ ESG = Environmental, Social, Governance; CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility; the two concepts overlap in name and topic (i.e., sustainable development)

⁸ The term "sustainable development actors" is used here in the broad sense of the word, meaning cooperation within the civil sector, government bodies, the non-profit sector, the private sector, etc.