



Co-participation & Sustainability Conference

Date and time: 27 November 2020 - 13:00 - 15:30

Organised by the University Council and Leiden University Green Office (LUGO)

Event description

How can co-participation bodies contribute to sustainability in the education, research, and operations of Leiden University? The University Council and Leiden University Green Office (LUGO) organised an online event for student and staff members of Programme Committees, Faculty Councils, and other co-participation bodies that are interested in making Leiden University greener.

During this event, co-participation members and sustainability experts discussed ideas, challenges, and best practices in small focus groups. How is sustainability best integrated in a programme curriculum? How can a faculty promote sustainable research and operations?

Hosts

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Audience

An audience poll was conducted using Glisser, focusing on which co-participation bodies people were part of, which Faculty they came from, how often they were thinking and talking about climate change, and what can be done to make Leiden University greener. The group of attendees was



relatively diverse in Faculty and Council, is often concerned with climate change and came up with sustainable solutions ranging from waste management to research. More precise data can be found in Appendix I.

Talk from Sanli Faez, Assistant Professor from Utrecht University in Physics

The audience got a talk from Sanli Faez, who motivated the attendees to integrate sustainability into the University, something he wrote about also for [ScienceGuide](#). Some of the takeaways are listed here:

- Focus should be on both operations and education + outreach and scientific communication
- Universities should (1) acknowledge high risks; (2) communicate broadly; (3) interdisciplinary innovation; (4) urgent transition; (5) teach the future. Also see Appendix II.
- **Ideas and report from breakout room FR/UR**
 - Points made:
 - Sustainable initiatives should not be overlapping too much with other projects
 - Use of public transport should be stimulated, compensation is now not enough to cover travel costs by public transport
 - There is often push-back from students to make education more sustainable. This point came from Public Administration, was less approved of by the rest of the attendees.
 - The paper used by the printers can be low in quality if that results in a smaller environmental impact
 - The travel budget should be justified with project proposals
 - The university should discourage its pension fund ABP to invest in fossil fuel companies, potentially via the LSVB
 - The university should divest from businesses and funds that contribute to climate change
 - Encourage cooperation with local partners for the cafeteria, restaurants and cafes of the University.
 - Vending machines now have a lot of plastic and unhealthy options. These options could be reduced.
 - One-time cutlery is sometimes used by the restaurants, while metal cutlery is available. This should be avoided at all times, as it is very unnecessary.
 - A lot of plastic was used at big events, that also was considered as unnecessary. Waste management is in general bad with big events



- Emphasis should be put on what is being done within the University, as the perception is currently that the University does not do much, while reality differs.
- Points suggested by LUGO
 - Introducing green teams for some or all Faculties that map out how a Faculty can become more sustainable in both its business operations as well as education
 - Writing a big proposal with several Councils that encompasses a or multiple topics in regards to sustainability, for instance the facilities, education, or divesting from fossil fuel businesses
 - Stronger cooperation between the Councils, to work together on proposals, support them and share them with each other
 - Everyone is encouraged to join [the Sustainability Network](#), which has a channel directed at co-participationers.
 - Approach the Green Office in need of advice or help
- **Ideas and report from breakout room OLC**
 - Many programmes have an overlap with sustainability, even if it's not the first thing that comes to mind. Examples given:
 - Studies in French: the environmental (decroissance) movement in France, reading French discussions about the environment as part of the French politics component.
 - The Classics and Ancient Civilisations programme is introducing a new course on slavery and freedom in light of the Black Lives Matter movement. Similarly, the programme could introduce a course on how ancient civilisations managed environmental issues.
 - Whether you want it or not, sustainability is becoming much more relevant for alumni in their professional careers, and in general for most topics. This is another reason on why it makes sense to incorporate sustainability into the curricula
 - Incorporate sustainability in curriculum
 - In all courses, or...
 - ... thesis topics/part of a course instead of a big course overhaul ...
 - ... guest lectures in every programme and/or one lecture about sustainability ...
 - ... Humanities, as an example of a faculty, as a whole → joint courses, like Wetenschapsfilosofie, in order to make it easier to provide programmes with less possibility to incorporate sustainability directly into the curriculum to deal with sustainability (in relation to their programme) ...



- ... read papers in French about sustainability, for example ...
- Is it possible to make sustainability a compulsory course in every programme of the university?
 - Some obstacles: qualified staff to teach is a requirement; not every programme lends itself easily for a mandatory course.
 - A possible solution for the issue above is arranging guest lectures. This can be a joint effort of multiple, similar, programmes.
 - Implement quota, in accordance to the applicability of the programme to implement sustainability (e.g. physics 30%, French 1%) → paired with public shaming?
- Perhaps use the Programmanormen to ease sustainability into the curricula, slightly top-down, but
- bottom-up would be the best approach!
 - Conduct surveys (“what do you miss and/or want in your programme regarding sustainability”) → Best practice: @IRO, The Hague department major, based on a survey like this resulted in real suggestions for specific courses and the appointment of an assistant professor (?) to deal with the implementation of sustainability into the programme
- Idea: hire a student assistant for every programme/faculty to do research and inquire into possibilities of the implementation of sustainability → would be a proper use of top-down policy, in order to bottom-up
 - This worked at the International Relations and Organisations programme and led to the hiring of a professor in environmental policy.
- Interaction and communication between co-participation bodies would be really helpful! OLC → FR → UR → possibly UR ↔ OLC
- Change is slow at the university
 - “leave alone”-policy
 - teachers have been teaching their topics for a long time, might not be too eager to change a iota → need to reckon with this
 - ... therefore, bottom-up approach, top-down would be too sensitive
- View sustainability as a crisis → given the quick covid-response of the university, it must be possible to do this for the climate as well
- Sustainability could be part of integrating non-western approaches in academia. How do non-western cultures and scholars think about the environment?

- **Notes from LUGO and UR:**
 - Contact the LUGO and UR, they’re there to help
 - Education survey LUGO



- LUGO is conducting a survey among students to find out how they think about integrating sustainability in the curricula. We will work with co-participation to translate the survey conclusions into curriculum reform for sustainability.
- You can help out with the survey by promoting it among students of your programme or faculty! For example, post it in Facebook groups, WhatsApp chats, Microsoft Teams, or student newsletters.
- However, do **not** promote it as a sustainability survey because it would lead to selection bias. Rather promote it as a survey about curriculum contents and/or societal themes.
- <https://www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/en/announcements/2020/11/give-your-opinion-on-societal-themes-at-the-university-and-win-a-prize>
- Sustainability Network
 - LUGO runs the Leiden University [Sustainability Network](#) for staff and members of co-participation on Microsoft Teams. On this platform, you can continue the conversations, share your ideas, and ask for feedback. We have a dedicated channel for people in co-participation.

There are some ideas on how to move forward:

- The conference could be organized on a yearly basis, with some potential adjustments
 - Take more time for the breakout rooms
 - Give some more guidance in the breakout rooms, and leave the discussions more open. Potentially use discussion questions.
 - Assign people into groups on specific topics for which they can sign up in advance
 - OLCs, later in time: set out surveys that assemble topics that should be discussed within a programme
- Starting a workgroup for University Council and Faculty Council members for a collaborative proposal on sustainability.



Appendix I

How are you active in co-participation?

Programme Committee (OLC)	38%
Faculty Council	28%
University Council	16%
Other	19%

Which faculty are you part of?

Humanities	55%
Law	3%
Science	6%
Social and Behavioural Sciences	23%
Archaeology	3%
Governance and Global Affairs	10%
Other/none	0%

How often do you think about climate change?

Daily	50%
Every few days	22%
Weekly	28%
Monthly or less	0%

How often do you think about climate change?

Daily	16%
Every few days	34%
Weekly	34%
Monthly or less	16%



What do you think can be greener at Leiden University?

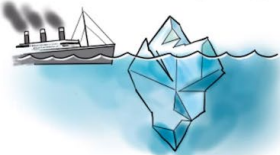
(This question was asked after Sanli Faez' talk.)

- education
- the investments made by the university and the contents of the cafeteria's
- education & research
- waste management
- awareness
- food packaging
- leiden university should cease all involvement with fossil fuel companies and completely divest from this sector
- vegetarian restaurants
- book sales
- I am not sure, but maybe funding of the university? for mair, maybe more focus sustainability in core courses.
- research
- recycling and energy efficiency
- valorizing our research on sustainability
- sustainability integrated into classes
- make sustainability part of all funding applications and negotiations with external partners. divestment of fossil fuel industries. cut unnecessary air travel.

Appendix II

UYA Climate Action Pledge

1- Acknowledge high risks



3- Interdisciplinary innovation



2- Communicate broadly



4- Urgent transition



5- Teach the future

