

Guideline Sustainability

Goals and Measures for the Sustainable Development of the Helmholtz Association (Version adopted by the General Assembly on September 15/16, 2021)

Translation: HZI

Preamble

The Helmholtz Association contributes with its research to the contents of the Agenda 2030 adopted by the United Nations. With its commitment¹ it sets a clear sign for the orientation of the community and the Helmholtz Centres towards sustainable development on an economic, social and ecological level.

In particular, climate change and loss of biodiversity represent key challenges for society and have an impact on almost all areas of life. In fulfilling its mission to make contributions to solving major and pressing issues facing society, science and industry through cutting-edge research, the Helmholtz Association is looking at what contribution it can make to solving this problem in all research fields. In doing so, the centers are also constantly driving forward their sustainable development - taking into account the necessities of the research work. The Helmholtz Association also advocates for political framework conditions and uses room for maneuver to enable research for sustainability and sustainable research. Our actions should thus be in line with the Paris Climate Agreement and the national sustainability goals, thus protecting the livelihoods of future generations, as stated in our mission. The Helmholtz Association is committed to the exemplary role of public institutions emphasized in the Federal Climate Protection Act and undertakes to take climate protection goals into account in planning and decision-making.

In order to concretize the multifaceted and complex topic of sustainability, the Helmholtz Centres define their goals and measures for sustainable development. In doing so, we are guided by the handout Sustainability Management for Non-University Research Organizations (LeNa)² This handout specifies the essential functional areas for sustainable development of research centers: Organizational Management, Research, Human Resources, Buildings and Infrastructure, and Supporting Processes.

Roles and responsibilities

Sustainability management in the Helmholtz Association and the centers takes into account the different roles and responsibilities. Since specific sustainability goals and measures, e.g. with regard to resource responsibility, in the context of further strategic objectives or the respective organizational set-up, can usually only be the responsibility of the individual centers, we agree as a community on a general guideline along which the centers define and implement more concrete goals as well as measures. The various roles are defined in a responsibility matrix.

¹ <https://www.helmholtz.de/en/about-us/our-values/sustainability/>

² <https://www.nachhaltig-forschen.de/startseite/>

As a community, we create the framework conditions for acting sustainably in dialogue with policy-makers and funding bodies.

Goals and measures - derived from the Helmholtz Association's commitment to sustainable development

Implementing organizational management in an integrative manner

(LeNa functional area: organizational management)

To ensure long-term scientific success, the Helmholtz Association relies on a value-oriented and effective organizational and leadership culture that clearly defines roles and processes, creates scope for creativity, and encourages employees to be creative and innovative. The Helmholtz Centres take care to adhere to the basic principles of good and responsible organizational governance³ and to promote a culture in which the principles of inclusive organizational governance are observed. Exemplary of this are participatory organizational development and an enabling culture.

The Centres

- develop an internal, center-specific sustainability strategy and a sustainability management system based on it.
- ensure that mutual understanding is strengthened by promoting exchange between science and administration and by practicing transparent governance that involves all employees.
- ensure a common understanding of leadership by defining leadership guidelines and tools and applying them.
- promote exchange and cooperation in their sustainability activities within the Helmholtz Association in order to create synergies.
- jointly strengthen their internal and external communication on sustainability topics, identify their stakeholders and include their interests in the dialogue.
- establish their specific sustainability reporting according to recognized standards. In addition, the center progress reports for the funding agencies briefly report on the respective sustainability activities in the five LeNa functional areas.
- work together to improve the legal and financial framework for implementing sustainability goals, thereby enabling sustainable action for themselves and the Helmholtz Association.

³https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Content/DE/Standardartikel/Themen/Bundesvermoegen/Privatisierungs_und_Beteiligungspolitik/Beteiligungspolitik/grundsaeetze-guter-unternehmensfuehrung-anlage-de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=8

Reflect on research topics and processes, as well as bring the results to bear in a socially competent manner.

(LeNa functional area: Research)

The Helmholtz Association and the centers create a working environment that offers opportunities for innovation. The principles of good scientific practice are observed and competencies for a holistic and socially responsible approach to research processes are promoted. Knowledge exchange with society, politics and industry is an important component here.

The Centres

- take measures to ensure compliance with good scientific practice. They appoint ombudspersons in the centers for this purpose.
- enable PhD students and postdocs to participate in training courses on the topic of "responsible research".
- continuously increase their open access publications and set targets for this.
- adopt internal guidelines based on the Helmholtz guidelines on research data management, in which the FAIR principles⁴ are essential design principles. They develop the necessary infrastructures to implement the guidelines.
- implement the reflection framework "Research in Social Responsibility" from the Sustainability Guidelines (LeNa)⁵ for the evaluation of their research activities.
- strengthen research topics related to sustainability within the framework of program-oriented funding. Innovative technologies developed within the programmatic framework are tested - where appropriate - in pilot projects as demonstrators.
- use existing digitization potential to make processes more efficient and, where appropriate, more climate-friendly. The framework for this is laid down in the digitization strategies of the community and the centers.

Offer attractive working environments and introduce future-proof human resources management.

(LeNa functional area: Human Resources)

The Helmholtz Association offers attractive work opportunities in a dynamic environment. It is crucial for us to recruit qualified employees at all levels and to deploy them according to their competencies. A prerequisite for this is professional human resources management. Our activities include supporting staff in their career development, dealing responsibly with fixed-term employment, equal opportunities and valuing diversity, health-preserving working conditions, and skills development for sustainable and responsible action.

⁴ <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>

⁵ <https://www.nachhaltig-forschen.de/handlungsfelder/forschung/forschen-in-gesellschaftlicher-verantwortung/>

The Centres

- develop concepts to strengthen diversity and inclusion. In research and administration, a balance is strived for under the aspects of diversity and equal opportunities.
- develop specific and flexible forms of work in order to also reduce energy and material consumption as well as CO2 emissions.
- support the qualification of managers as role models and multipliers with regard to the establishment of a sustainable and value-oriented work culture.
- protect and promote the safety and health of employees. They offer company integration and health management, respond to the change in working environments due to the digital transformation, and strive to ensure the performance and satisfaction of employees by adapting working conditions to their respective needs.

Organizing the construction and operation of research infrastructures in a resource-efficient way

(LeNa functional area: Buildings and Infrastructure)

Excellent research infrastructures are a hallmark of the Helmholtz Association. We attach great importance to orienting ourselves to the principles of sustainable development when planning, constructing and operating buildings and research infrastructures. The aim is to provide an attractive laboratory environment and attractive workplaces in research, administration and operations in line with demand. This requires a holistic approach that takes into account the fulfillment of technical and functional requirements as well as the issues of user satisfaction, energy and resource efficiency, and economic viability.

The Centres

- Develop an ambitious plan that outlines the time horizon for a greenhouse gas-neutral research facility. They define targets and measures for this in site-specific climate protection concepts.
- develop climate-compatible energy concepts that help to reduce the energy consumption of buildings and facilities or enable independent, greenhouse gas-free energy production without jeopardizing research activities. Energy management systems according to ISO 50001 or corresponding audit systems can be supportive in this respect.
- will sustainably develop and modernize buildings and infrastructures from an environmental perspective and with regard to a changing working world.
- establish a carbon footprint, also improving the quality of environmental performance indicators.
- pay attention to resource efficiency and life cycle when procuring, further developing and modernizing information technologies, as well as integrating them into holistic infrastructure development.
- also use the potential of digitization to record and control media consumption more efficiently.

Responsible design of supporting processes

(LeNa functional area: Supporting processes)

As the Helmholtz Association, we aim to design all processes that support research and center operations in a resource-efficient and responsible manner, integrating various aspects of sustainability: for example, in the purchase of products and services, in the mobility needs of employees, or in the organization and implementation of research conferences. Here, too, the community is committed to creating the necessary framework conditions under grant law.

The Centres

- reduce domestic flights where possible and analyze the need for international business trips. They develop an appropriate framework in this regard. They establish travel planning for the necessary business trips, taking sustainability aspects into account. There shall be compensation of the resulting greenhouse gas emissions.
- identify and leverage digitization potential in infrastructure and administration.
- establish a sustainable purchasing process that takes into account not only economic but also ecological and social aspects. The life cycle of goods and equipment is also important in this context. Changing legal framework conditions are implemented with foresight in invitations to tender, selection and awarding of contracts, as well as in the selection of companies and products.
- advocate for sustainable mobility options to the place of work.
- develop sustainable event management and increasingly use digital and hybrid event formats.

The Helmholtz Association aims to reconcile excellent research, sustainable development and climate protection. Sustainable action is not only a social obligation but also offers the opportunity to secure the success and attractiveness of the individual centers and the community in the long term.