

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

REPORT  
2024



# INTRODUCTION

To understand the significance of a task within an organization, examining its governance structure is essential. At Freie Universität Berlin, the topic of sustainability is anchored in two parts of the leadership team. The Director of Administration and Finance is responsible for the sustainability management of the university, and the First Vice-President, who is also the deputy of the President, is in charge of strategic questions of sustainability and connecting the issue with the other guiding principles of the university. This dual responsibility demonstrates the university's commitment to sustainable development as both a leadership priority and an integrative mission.

According to the results of a survey conducted in 2023, 47 per cent of the approximately 1,500 research projects at our university address at least one global sustainability goal. 11 per cent even do so in an interdisciplinary manner focused on sustainable development. At Freie Universität Berlin, sustainability is considered a strategic priority, not only due to its critical relevance but also for its potential to unify various university areas. There is hardly any other topic that creates such broad and diverse opportunities for intersectoral cooperation across the entire university.

For more than 20 years, Freie Universität Berlin has been addressing the question of how to make its own institution more sustainable. It has developed a sustainability management system addressing the entire university in its various facets, starting with an energy management system, then adding a certified environmental management system according to ISO 14001. A wide variety of climate protection and sustainability goals, programs, and instruments have been implemented during this time. The entire process was one of step-by-step development and also the result of an institutional learning process.

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is based on the inextricably linked nature of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. For Freie Universität, it is crucial to consider the SDGs as an integral whole as well as in their interconnected and reciprocal linkages. This also applies to this report: it takes a look at the individual SDGs, but the focus remains on the overarching activities and ties at Freie Universität Berlin.

## SPOTLIGHT REPORTING

Freie Universität Berlin recently published its last [Sustainability Report 2024](#) and its last [Environmental Statement 2024](#) according to EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) .

## SPOTLIGHT COMMITMENTS

A series of published sustainability guidelines underline Freie Universität's commitment. These include the [Environmental Guidelines](#), the [Sustainability Mission Statement](#), the [Climate Emergency Declaration](#) and the [Climate Protection Agreement](#) with the State of Berlin.



## END POVERTY IN ALL ITS FORMS EVERYWHERE



Ensuring adequate employment is a key aspect of SDG 1, and Freie Universität contributes to this goal through its role as an employer. The main basis for the pay of university employees is the collective agreement for the public service of the federal states (can be viewed internally). Equal pay for women and men is guaranteed. Family-friendly study and work conditions further reduce the risk of poverty.

Freie Universität is committed to equal access to education. Students without resources or with few resources of their own can receive financial support through the Federal Training Assistance Act (Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz, Bafög) and the Bafög counselling service of the student services centre Studierendenwerk Berlin.

Freie Universität Berlin strives to provide students with affordable housing through the Studierendenwerk Berlin. Students receive advice when looking for apartments, among other things at the Housing InfoCentre of the Studierendenwerk and at the accommodation service of the Freie Universität. They also receive financially supported meals in the Freie Universität canteens run by the Studierendenwerk Berlin.

In March 2024 Freie Universität Berlin was hosting and co-organizing the largest poverty and public health congress in Germany for the second time. Opened by the Federal Minister of Health, actors from politics, science, health care, practice and self-help exchange ideas on topics of health inequality.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The project *WealthTalks: The (Re-) Production of Wealth Inequality in Everyday Talk* is being implemented from 2023 until 2027 by the Institute for Media and Communications Studies. It discusses why the public oppose wealth inequality but not support measures to change the distribution of wealth. The project is funded by Volkswagen Stiftung.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The seminar *Basic Income and inequality: a basic proposition?* of the Institute of Philosophy examines how a basic income works, compares it with other types of state benefits in cash and in kind and analyses its potential to reduce inequality.





## END HUNGER, ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY AND IMPROVED NUTRITION, AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The state-supported Studierendenwerk Berlin provides healthy, fresh, and inexpensive food for students and staff at eight cafeterias and canteens at Freie Universität Berlin. The canteens offer various meals with low climate impact and provide vegetarian and vegan dishes every day. The main dining hall has been certified since 2016 on the basis of the European Environmental Management System standard EMAS. The Studierendenwerk thereby demonstrates that ecological and economical gastronomy is feasible in large kitchens. In the dining halls, attention is paid to keeping food waste as low as possible. Food waste has steadily decreased since 2017, reaching less than 100 grams per visitor in the main dining hall.

FU Berlin's FUDsharing initiative provides a forum to raise awareness about food waste and promote sustainable diets. Students, staff and local citizens can pick-up left-over food from nearby grocery stores, cafés, and bakeries for free and distribute them to anyone interested. By moving to an even more visible campus location and increasing its social media activity, FUDsharing has managed to reach more volunteers in collecting, distributing and receiving food otherwise wasted.



The voluntary initiative UniGardening@Sustain it! is committed to, among other things, low-threshold, participatory and free educational formats for sustainable agriculture, permaculture, climate and resource protection, the preservation of biological diversity and sustainable forms of consumer habits and lifestyles.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The Freie Universität Berlin has completed a feasibility study on the carbonization of green waste and use of biochar on campus. Suitable locations for the negative emissions technology are the Botanical Garden and the Veterinary Medicine Campus in Döppel. The two plants could save up to 2,500 tons of carbon dioxide equivalents annually.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The workshop *Let the pig out?! - Can we afford (non)-sustainable livestock farming?* deals with sustainability in agriculture in relation to animal welfare and animal protection. It is an inter-disciplinary workshop of veterinary medicine (Freie Universität) with business administration students from the Nuremberg Technical University.

### 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



## ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES

Freie Universität values employee health and promotes workplace well-being through its '*FUndament Gesundheit*' program. Designing working conditions to be conducive to health and offering a wide range of measures to improve the working climate and motivation among employees are key features of the occupational health management efforts made by the university.

The Healthy Campus project, '*Freie Universität Berlin: Study in Good Health*', focuses on promoting student well-being through targeted prevention and health initiatives. The program aims to enhance student well-being through targeted prevention and health promotion initiatives.



For one year so-called support points for mental well-being with trained psychologists exist and are now evaluated. These decentralized points of contact promote mental health and provide first aid counselling for all kind of mental problems in daily life learning and working.

Additional offer for PhDs is the Graduate Studies Support Program and mental health Days. Moreover, the Healthy Campus Day 2024 for students shows divers opportunities to keep healthy.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

*Mobile Mosquitos* – a research project in Global Medicine and Health Research establishes an interdisciplinary research consortium to study the entangled mobilities of humans and *Aedes* mosquitoes in India, Mexico, Tanzania and Germany. Understanding their entangled movement is of utmost importance for developing successful vector control strategies.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The General professional skills course "*Shaping sustainability - resilience in the climate crisis*" tackles the emotions raised by climate change and biodiversity loss, like anger and disbelief, guilt and fear or despair. Students learn about the concept of "ecological grief" that provides answers, the seminar gives space to exchange thoughts and become creative.



## Highlight: Volunteering for Sustainability

The Freie Universität Berlin has a number of voluntary initiatives in which university members and interested neighbours get involved in various sustainability issues: For ten years now, students, employees, alumni and neighbours have been gardening in the Botanical Garden in a natural and climate-resilient manner at UniGardening@Sustain it!. Together with departments and initiatives at the Freie Universität, the Botanical Garden, nature conservation organizations and educational institutions, they also organize workshops and seminars for natural, climate-resilient gardening, beekeeping and dyeing with plant dyes. In June 2024, the initiative celebrated its tenth anniversary with many guests, including the First Vice-President and the Director of Botanic Garden. The Sustainability Days of the hands-on initiative Sustain it! also took place in June under the motto “RealUtopias – What if the future is good?!” with, among other things, activities on the precarious housing situation, especially for Berlin students, and a blind tasting with rescued food.



## ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING



Since the summer semester of 2016, the Sustainability and Energy Management Unit has assessed all courses for their relevance to the 17 UN SDGs. This survey has been based on all course titles and descriptions from the course catalog, combined with criteria for an SDG reference or focus. For the winter semester 2023/2024, the priority model of sustainability was used for the first time - weighting ecological or socio-ecological justice goals as a must-criterion for a sustainability focus.

The evaluation reveals that 709 courses, or 17.8% of the 3,980 offered, address at least one SDG. Of these, 3.8% (153) have an explicit sustainability focus. SDG 10 was addressed most frequently, followed by SDG 16 and SDG 4.

Within the General Professional Skills Area (ABV) at bachelor level, elective courses within eight competence areas are offered to improve professional and personal skills. The competence area “Sustainable Development” has been offering 8 to 10 project seminars per semester based on ESD principles (education for sustainable development). The courses have different focuses, ranging from resilience and biodiversity to sustainability communication, management and education formats to living lab research on biochar as a negative emission technology.

The Dahlem Center for Academic Teaching (DCAT) has been offering a wide range of workshops, individual coachings and an optional certificate to teaching staff to foster their personal and professional skills in the classroom. In 2023, a two-day workshop on “Transformative Teaching and Learning in Times of Multiple Crises” was implemented for the second time to sensitize teachers for didactic ESD possibilities.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The *Week of Good Scientific Practice* takes place for the second time at the Freie University of Berlin in 2024. Various aspects of scientific integrity are examined in numerous workshops and lectures.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

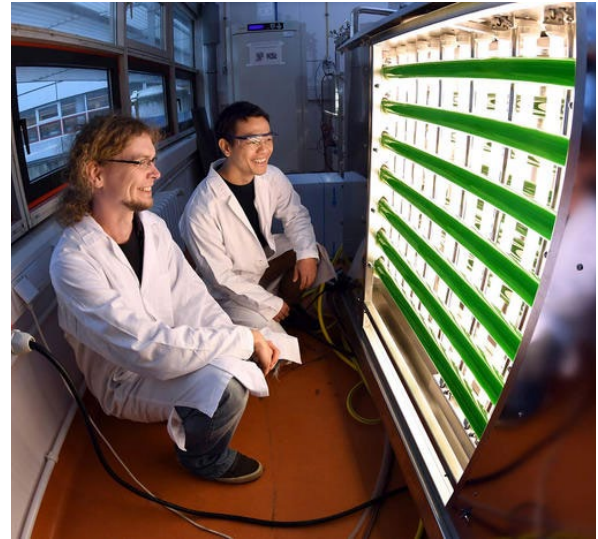
The seminar *Transformative Learning: A coping strategy in the face of uncertainty and complexity in second modernity?* of the Department of Education and Psychology, addresses the risk society and how complexity and uncertainty can be addressed through transformative learning.



# COURSES SORTET ACCORDING TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, 2023/24







## Highlight: Department of Physics: On the Way to Climate Neutrality

Since 2020, the Sustainability Working Group at the Department of Physics has been contributing to achieving the climate neutrality envisaged by the Freie Universität Berlin. The working group developed the sustainability agenda of the Department of Physics for 2023/2024 in a one-year participatory process. In addition to the technical infrastructure and the operational operation of teaching and research in the Department of Physics, the appropriate integration of sustainability topics in the curriculum and the spectrum of research topics is also addressed. Sustainability is seen as a university cross-sectional task.



## ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Gender equity, anti-discrimination, equal opportunities, and family friendliness are overarching goals that Freie Universität Berlin has been committed to self-critically reflecting on and dismantling for decades. This is most recently expressed in the “Gender Equity Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2026”, which includes regulations, self-imposed policies, goals, benchmarks and measures for action. Many advising and training programs for employees and students are additionally implemented since then.



The Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Unit is establishing a conflict and complaints management system. Freie Universität Berlin, moreover, initiated a central diversity fund in summer 2024. This allows all members of Freie Universität Berlin to apply for funding for decentralized pilot projects in the area of diversity and anti-discrimination.

The Toolbox for Gender & Diversity in Teaching of the Margherita von Brentano Center for Gender Studies helps to implement gender- and diversity-sensitive teaching and language.

The Dual Career & Family Service advises employees and students with family responsibilities on how to reconcile work and family life, and offers a special service for dual-career couples to support the life partners of newly appointed professors.

Freie Universität's long-standing commitment to gender equality, diversity, and equal opportunity is recognized through the TOTAL E-QUALITY Award, received consistently for over 20 years.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The study *Over Twenty Years of Publications in Ecology: Over-Contribution of Women Reveals a New Dimension of Gender Bias* analyzes over 5000 articles in ecology from 1999 to 2021. The researchers developed the Women's Contribution Index (WCI) to quantify the individual contributions of female authors.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The seminar *Climate crisis research lab: Transregional and intersectional interdependencies* addresses that climate issues are transversal and connect different social categories and regions of the world. Through dialog processes initiated by students, constructive potentials are to be identified in order to promote a common understanding of these interdependencies.



## Highlight: Award as a “Family-Friendly University”

In 2023, the Freie Universität Berlin was recognized as a family-friendly university for the sixth time in a row. With the “family-friendly university audit” initiated by the non-profit Hertie Foundation, berufundfamilie Service GmbH recognizes the development of support and advice services for parents and carers at the Freie Universität Berlin. These include, among other things: the weekly late consultation hours LateLine or consultation options via video, which make it easier for families in particular to access the Dual Career & Family Service offers. This also includes special support offers for international (guest) scientists in balancing work and family before and during their stay, especially childcare. Since 2020, an employee of the Dual Career & Family Service has also been working as a care guide and provides additional advice for caring relatives.



## ENSURE ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL

In 2004, Freie Universität implemented optimized water control and management practices, reducing water consumption by about one-third within five years. In 2023, water consumption was reduced by around 45% compared to the baseline.

Furthermore, Freie Universität Berlin has built special infiltration and cistern systems at various locations so that precipitation can seep into the ground or be collected and used for watering the green spaces on campus.

Wastewater or sewage from Freie Universität Berlin is sampled and discharged into the sewage system of the Berliner Wasserbetriebe in accordance with legal requirements. It is then thoroughly processed in water treatment facilities.

Drinking water is available in every building and without charge to all members of the university. For the dishes in the cafeterias of the Freie Universität Berlin, in addition to the CO<sub>2</sub> footprint, the water footprint is marked in order to ensure transparency and choice.



On the occasion of the United Nations World Water Day, the nationwide association "a tip:tap" honoured the initiatives GreenFUBib and Sustain it! of Freie Universität Berlin for their exemplary commitment to free access to tap water. They received the "#pipewaterfriendly" award in 2023.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The Einstein Research Unit *Climate and Water under Change (CliWaC)* investigates water-related risks of climate change in the Berlin-Brandenburg region. Humanities scholars, social scientists, cultural scientists and natural scientists from the Berlin University Alliance are working closely together. In three case studies, the effects on the topics of heavy rainfall in the city, the Spree River and the Spree River catchment.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

In the seminar groundwater recharge and hydrogeology of bedrock, students in the Master of Geological Sciences learn the basics of water flow and dewatering in tunnel construction as well as practical application examples in tunnel and underground mining in the Alps.



## 7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



### ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE, AND MODERN ENERGY FOR ALL



Freie Universität Berlin is continuing on its path towards climate neutrality. Next year, the university will develop a 2025-2030 climate protection program, outlining climate-friendly measures across all university sectors. In order to improve the efficiency of the heat supply, a 5th combined heat and power plant was put into operation in a new institute building. Ten photovoltaic (PV) systems with an output of 756 kWp are in operation. Two

further systems will go into operation this year, increasing the capacity to nearly 1 MWp. Further PV systems are currently being planned to nearly triple the capacity by 2030.

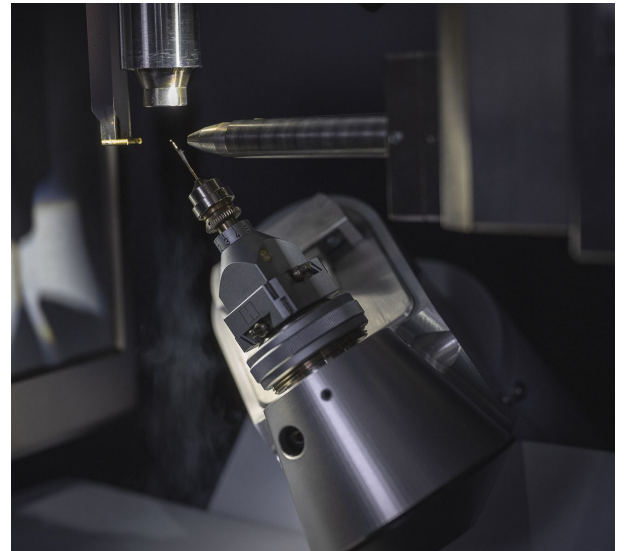
Programs and measures to improve energy efficiency are an important part of the campus management's energy strategy. With a combination of various technical, structural, organizational and behavioral measures, the university has succeeded in reducing energy consumption in 2023 to its lowest level since 2000. This corresponds to a reduction of one third, despite an increase in heated floor space. Based on today's energy prices, this will save 11 million euros in energy costs per year compared to the base year 2020. To support the efficiency program in laboratories, the Department of Biology, Chemistry and Pharmacy will appoint a new green laboratory officer in 2025. The task force Energy Efficiency established during the 2021/22 energy crisis will continue its work.

#### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

*Circularity with recycled and biogenic raw materials.* The Sustainable Solutions for PFAS Removal project is to develop an environmentally friendly solution to remove perfluorinated and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS) from water. PFAS are a growing threat to the environment due to their longevity and mobility.

#### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The seminar *Carbon storage with biochar* deals with the use of biomass for the production of biochar. The use of biochar serves to improve the soil and store carbon. In the IPCC special report from 2018, biochar was named as a promising negative emissions technology to combat climate change.



## Highlight: New Construction of the SupraFAB Research Building receives Sustainability Certificate

The Freie Universität Berlin makes great efforts to save energy in its approximately 200 buildings and to build new buildings according to the highest ecological standards. In 2024, the new research building for suprafunctional architectures at biointerfaces (SupraFAB) was awarded the federal sustainability certificate for sustainable building in silver. The certification evaluates construction measures, among other things according to their ecological, economic and socio-cultural quality. In order to reach even the lowest level of certification, buildings must meet significantly more than the legally requested standards. Efficient heat recovery, adjustable air exchange rates, resource-saving concrete, accessibility, night cooling, extensive bird protection measures and a compact, clear yet flexible building structure contribute to the sustainability of the SupraFAB building.



## PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT, AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

More than 5,700 people are currently employed at Freie Universität Berlin: from professors and academic staff to administrative and operating staff. As an employer, the FU sees it as its duty to support its employees and to create a favourable working environment. In the spirit of lifelong learning, the Continuing Education Centre offers a comprehensive range of training courses.

Freie Universität is subject to the legal regulation regarding the fair and non-discriminatory equal treatment of all employees and endorses this out of its own conviction. This naturally includes equal pay for men and women. Gender equality, diversity, equal opportunities and family friendliness are part of the university's identity. In order to meet these goals, the Executive Board of Freie Universität adopted a concept in 2021 that defines the diversity strategy of the university as well as related goals and measures until 2026.

The compatibility of career and family plays a major role at Freie Universität and is actively promoted through various stakeholders and activities. The Dual Career & Family Service at Freie Universität is available to advise employees and students. It offers information on childcare, parental allowance and maternity leave. There are also several parent-child rooms on the campuses, which can be used as places of retreat and childcare.

Freie Universität Berlin offers numerous opportunities to learn a profession or gain professional experience. In addition to the traditional vocational training, school pupils, students, trainees, and young professionals can gather valuable professional experience and knowledge during an internship.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

At *Lab2Venture Goes Green*-Project at Department Chemistry, Biology and Pharmacy students at grades 8 to 12 receive real project assignments from green companies or institutions. The young people implement the projects over the course of a school year. The aim is to develop systemic sustainability relationships with pupils. In addition, the project aims to awaken the young people's spirit of research and provide impetus for green career guidance.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The course "*Innovation Economics: Understanding Transitions towards Sustainability*" of the Module Applied Economic Theory at the School of Economics in the winter term 2023/24 consisted of two parts. Students were introduced to the fundamentals of innovation economics to understand the transitions towards sustainability. There was also a deep dive into current topics of transitions.



## BUILD RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE, PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FOSTER INNOVATION

Established in 2021, the idea and innovation management system invests in solutions for socio-ecological change have a positive impact on teaching, research, administration and management or transfer of knowledge within the university. In 2024 the FUTurist call for proposals promotes, for the fourth time, problem-based and solution-oriented ideas of university members that make a direct contribution to the objectives of the climate emergency declaration or the sustainability mission statement of Freie Universität. Living Labs additionally support research and practice communities that enliven the university campus as a place of research and institutional practices for sustainable development.

The Freie Universität Berlin is a research partner in the joint project FUBIC All-Electricity Realization (FAE-R) for the electricity-based heating transition in the technology district. The entire energy supply of the new technology and start-up center FUBIC will be purely electric (all-electricity) and CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral via renewable energies.



### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The collaborative research project *FutureForest* uses AI processes to provide forest managers with information for climate-adapted forest conversion. This is done using a decision support system (FF.ai DSS) that simulates the effects of climate forecasts and forest conversion scenarios. The estimates are based on several climate scenarios and take into account forestry and ecological indicators (e.g. wood growth, carbon storage, biodiversity). The aim is to create a sound basis for decision-making and to promote interdisciplinary exchange.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

In the seminar *Study of kestrel behavior*, veterinary medicine students study the behavior and development of wild birds using a webcam in a nesting box. They annotate data using digital AI techniques. This data is used to train AI algorithms. The behavioral patterns and individual recognition characteristics detected and quantified by the AI algorithms are examined and evaluated with the students in order to formulate recommendations for falcon management.





## Highlight: Green Chemistry

“Green chemistry” aims to develop chemical products and processes in scientific research and industry that minimize environmental impact and maximize efficiency. The Freie Universität Berlin was able to record important successes here. A research team at Freie Universität developed a resource-saving and environmentally friendly process to adsorb chlorine from a residual gas stream containing chlorine. Chlorine is one of the most important basic chemicals in the chemical industry. The production of chlorine is one of the most energy-intensive processes in the chemical industry. Researchers at Freie Universität have also succeeded in safely storing and electrolyzing the gas hydrogen chloride in the form of ionic liquids. The new technology makes a contribution to the sustainable transformation of chemistry and the energy transition.



## REDUCE INEQUALITY WITHIN AND AMONG COUNTRIES



For the past years, Freie Universität has been increasingly addressing the issue of diversity. The Diversity and Antidiscrimination Unit advises and supports the university management in the strategic development of diversity issues. The units overarching goal is to ensure sustainable structural equity in the university. With the adoption and publication of anti-discrimination statutes in February 2024, the foundation has also been laid for the next steps in establishing

the diversity governance structure.

To ensure that the outstanding changes can be implemented, the Executive Board of Freie Universität Berlin decided in 2024 to update the diversity concept until 2026.

Furthermore, Freie Universität supports refugee students and scientists continuing their studies and research. The Welcome@FUBerlin program strives to continue supporting refugees and migrants by providing special support and listing the service infrastructure.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

Until 2025 the research program *trAndeS* analyzes the relationships between sustainable development and social inequalities in the Andean region analyzing socio-economic, socio-political and socio-ecological inequalities. Research in this field is conducted via a postgraduate program where master's students and PhDs investigate e. g., the structural conditions for the creation of more inclusive, peaceful and just societies.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The course "*Inequality constellations in higher education and their significance for participation and academic success*" makes diversity at universities the subject of discussion. It relates to research projects about higher education and management aspects around diversity, like the ones mentioned above. The course is designed as teaching research project using data from central student surveys.



## Highlight: Strengthening Equal Opportunities and Reducing Discrimination

2023 Freie Universität Berlin was certified with the Stifterverband's "Diversity Shaping" ("Vielfalt Gestalten") diversity audit. In a three-year accompanied organizational development process, the university was supported in developing and successfully implementing its own diversity strategy. The measures identified in the audit are to be implemented in the coming years. A diversity concept was developed in 2021 that documented the university's diversity approach and strategy and served as a starting point for further work. It will now be continued until 2026. With the adoption and publication of the anti-discrimination statutes of the Freie Universität Berlin in February 2024, a further basis has been created for the next steps in building the diversity governance structure.



## MAKE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

Freie Universität Berlin stands for excellent research, committed teaching and international study in one of Europe's most exciting capitals. The university campus is a place for meeting and interacting with people from quite different origins and backgrounds. The university makes great efforts to create the campus as sustainable and inclusive as possible. Most buildings are accessible to people with disabilities. They have the opportunity to obtain advice on successful studies from the Office for Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses. The Representative for the Severely Disabled represents the interests of severely disabled persons in all university committees.

The university has launched a campaign for a safe campus. Especially, the international and interfaith community of students and teachers should feel comfortable on the university campus and not be offended by racist behavior at any time.

The green campus of Freie Universität is also a place for regeneration. The biodiverse green spaces have a high quality of stay, which is continuously being improved. Their value for human well-being, mental health and biodiversity is being researched and implemented in the "Multispecies Campus" Living Lab.

Good public transport connections are complemented by 7 hubs for shared electric mobility and a growing network of cycle paths. As a result, over 80 percent of employees and students commute to Freie Universität by public transportation or bicycle.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The young AMBER research group from Freie Universität Berlin and the Institute for Ecological Economy Research (IÖW) have received federal funding of over 2.3 million euros for a research project on active mobility. The interdisciplinary research team is investigating the impact of active mobility on health and climate change - under current conditions and in future scenarios.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The course *Resilience in the climate crisis* deals with reactions to the loss of nature and a reliable climate. Feelings such as guilt, fear or resignation can paralyze our own activities and make it difficult to take countermeasures. Possible answers can be found in the concept of "ecological grief". People first go through phases of denial, aggression and depression before they can look positively to the future again through acceptance.





## Highlight: Sustainable Mobility on Campus

How employees, students and visitors can get to Freie Universität as easily, flexibly and environmentally friendly as possible and move around the extensive campus spread across the city is the central theme of Freie Universität Berlin's sustainability efforts. Since 2023, the mobility platform of the Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe Jelbi has been offering new locations for sharing vehicles on the Dahlem campus with the support of the Freie Universität Berlin, the approval of the Steglitz-Zehlendorf district and financial support from the Senate Department for Mobility, Transport, Climate Protection and the Environment, which is thus better connected to the subway and S-Bahn. Two further locations are at the subway stations Dahlem-Dorf and Onkel Toms Hütte.

With the “FUturRad” project, which was launched in 2024 and funded by the National Climate Protection Initiative, Freie Universität also wants to create a bicycle-friendly campus over the next three years and focus on the topic of bicycle mobility.

## 12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



## ENSURE SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION PATTERNS

As the core institutions of the academic and educational system universities have a special responsibility with regard to making the world more sustainable. Procurement is one of the key instruments for sustainability action. Since 2011, FU Berlin has systematically integrated sustainability criteria into the procurement of goods and services. In 2024, a new workshop concept was created to explicitly train employees in sustainable procurement. Aligned with its commitment to community-wide sustainability, Freie Universität promotes the circular economy through sharing, repair, and reuse programs. To highlight three: Freie Universität Berlin has been cooperating with the start-up “fainin” in 2024. In a dedicated community, university members can borrow and lend items such as drills, SUP boards and trekking tents free of charge on the rental platform. The “FUndgrube” is the central marketplace for the reuse and sale of used furniture, appliances and objects. Here, too, there are regular opportunities to swap or share. The “FUDsharing@SustainIT!” initiative deals with the topic of food rescue and appreciation.

Waste management at Freie Universität follows the basic principle of waste avoidance, followed by re-use, then waste disposal. Recycling of recyclable materials is of great importance. Most of the waste generated is fed into the recycling loop. The residual waste is then recycled into energy by the municipal waste disposal company through incineration, so that a total of over 95 percent of the university’s waste is reused.



### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

With the project *GreenCHEM – Testing, adaptation and implementation of transfer formats*, the Department of Economics and the Department of Biology, Chemistry and Pharmacy work together with external partners to create a room for transfer to drive forward the chemical transition – meaning the possibility to avoid the use of fossil and toxic substances by creating a circular economy based on renewable raw materials.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The course *Alles bio oder was? Analyse und Vergleich transnationaler Regulierung [All organic or what? Analysing and comparing transnational regulation]* offered by the Department of Political and Social Sciences analyses and compares forms of regulation in the form of mandatory sustainability certifications and due diligence obligations in different sectors, such as the Act on Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains.



## Highlight: Successfully EMAS-certified Management System

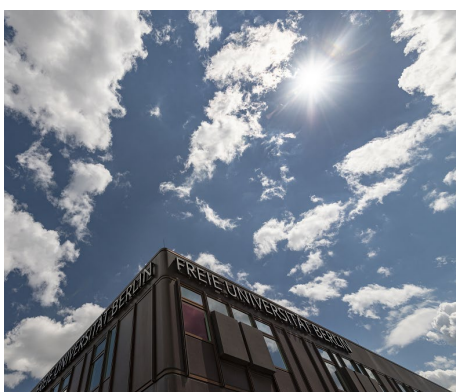
Since 2021, Freie Universität Berlin's sustainability and environmental management has been certified in accordance with the European Union's Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). This standard is one of the most demanding seals of approval worldwide for demonstrating environmental performance beyond legal requirements and a continuous improvement process. Regular self-audits and subsequent external audits by an external assessor are used to check whether planned improvements in operational environmental protection have been achieved. In 2024, the FU Berlin was successfully revalidated. As part of the EMAS certification and sustainability management at the Freie Universität Berlin, the biennial sustainability report and the annual environmental statement were also published in 2024.





## TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

Freie Universität Berlin has a long-standing commitment to climate mitigation. Through a mix of different programs, measures and incentives, it has succeeded in reducing campus-related electricity and heat consumption by a total of 33,2 percent between 2001 and 2022. Adjusted with the increase in floor space, the reduction was even 40,0 percent. During the same period, Freie Universität reduced its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by nearly 90 percent.



In December 2019, Freie Universität was the first German university to declare a climate emergency. This declaration addresses seven goals, most notably considering climate protection in all university plans and decisions and striving for climate neutrality by 2025. The university has changed their policy on the latter. As a result of wide-ranging discussions with professors, employees and students the Executive Board have concluded that external CO<sub>2</sub> offset certificates should play no role in

achieving climate neutrality at Freie Universität. Instead, the university will focus on its own institutional actions and will set up an internal climate protection fund to be used for financing additional climate protection and biodiversity measures on our campus in the future.

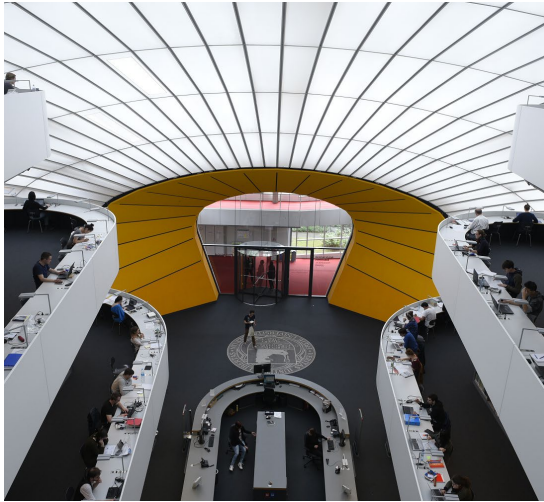
### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

In 2024 the Volkswagen Foundation has approved two pioneering research projects at FU Berlin as part of its “Circularity with Recycled and Biogenic Raw Materials” funding initiative with a total of over 2 million euros. Both projects represent practical research approaches in green chemistry that contribute not only to the valorization of residual materials, but also advance innovative technologies for wastewater treatment and more sustainable plant protection.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The seminar *Disasters - Theories, Concepts and Perspectives* discusses disasters as critical interactions within and between societies and their (bio-physical) environments. The seminar covers the topics: theoretical approaches to disasters, risk perception, resilience, disaster cultures, collective, individual behavior and responses to disasters and disaster management.





## Highlight: Resilience during the Energy Crisis

The 2022/2023 energy crisis and the sharp rise in energy prices also presented Freie Universität Berlin with major challenges. The Berlin Senate called on the state's universities to develop programs to save at least ten percent of energy and staged emergency programs for a possible interruption in the supply of gas and heat. A newly installed energy efficiency working group for operational measures to reduce energy consumption, led by the Engineering and Utilities Division, developed short-term savings proposals. The program of measures is based on raising staff and students' awareness of energy savings, lowering the heating temperature and reducing the running times of ventilation systems, lighting, office and laboratory equipment. In the winter semester 2022/2023, almost 10% of heating energy and almost 11% of electricity was saved compared to the reference year 2019. The positive experiences of the energy efficiency working group have led to the decision to continue its work.



## CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS, AND MARINE RESOURCES

To safeguard water resources, Freie Universität employs an intricate waste management system. Water-soluble environmentally harmful waste, such as laboratory chemicals, is appropriately disposed by Freie Universität's Special Waste Disposal team.

Freie Universität utilizes the electronic hazardous substances register "CLAKS" to maintain detailed records of hazardous substances inventory. Due to the careful management, including regular checks and protective measures, potential negative impacts on water, soil, and air have been mitigated.

Studierendenwerk Berlin adheres to stringent ecological standards when sourcing fish for all canteens of Freie Universität. Catch rates are regulated to sustain fish populations, and efforts are made to minimize by catch and habitat damage caused by fishing gear.



By the end of 2024, Freie Universität Berlin opens a new Biodiversity Dahlem cooperation building where scientists from the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries will be working with researchers from Freie Universität Berlin to investigate important issues relating to biodiversity and the impact of humans on the environment.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

Funded by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labor, a project in the biology, chemistry and pharmacy departments is working on the development of a novel graphene oxide-based membrane to improve water treatment.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

In the lecture *The Atmospheric Water Cycle*, students from the Department of Geosciences deal, among other things, with the influence of anthropogenic climate change on the water cycle and learn to critically analyze the results of climate models.



## PROTECT, RESTORE, AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION, AND HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Freie Universität Berlin's buildings, nestled within extensive green areas of Steglitz-Zehlendorf, feature over two thirds of the grounds undeveloped, with green roofs enhancing the local microclimate, providing habitats for insects and birds, and improving various building properties, including thermal insulation and heat shielding. Biodiversity and the protection of species diversity are central issues for the university, which are addressed in research, teaching and on campus. Through interdisciplinary approaches and cooperation between different departments, the Freie Universität Berlin is helping to raise awareness of the urgency of preserving biodiversity and to develop innovative solutions to the challenges of dealing with this global issue.



The Freie Universität Berlin has declared **2024 the Year of Biodiversity**, thereby sending a strong signal. Freie Universität Berlin was the first German university to publish its biodiversity strategy on May 22. This includes goals and fields of action. A guideline with recommendations, rules, and specifications has also already been developed. The starting point of the Year of Biodiversity was a ceremony in the Botanical Garden followed by guided tours, talks and exhibition stands for guests from the university and the public.

Since 2024, the university has also employed first time its own biodiversity manager. As part of the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN), Freie Universität Berlin launched a Community of Practice Biodiversity in 2024 to facilitate transformative peer learning and exchange on an international level.

Within a Living Lab on multispecies cohabitation funded with € 60,000 by the Ideas and Innovation Management, important elements of the biodiversity strategy are being addressed: The campus biotope types are being recorded, target organisms are being defined in collaboration with the Animal aided design office, art and public relations work are ensuring increased visibility and acceptance and a research study on biodiversity and well-being has been started.

In 2024 “FUtunist” initiative funded two projects on biodiversity: a 100 m<sup>2</sup> planting of woody species based on the Tiny Forest concept and an environmental education project for kindergarten children. A FUtunist project from the previous year was completed in February 2024: a kestrel nesting box equipped with a camera was installed and both university members and other interested people could observe the breeding and rearing of the kestrels.



Since 2019, Freie Universität has had a Coordination Office for Nature, Environment, and Sustainability Education (NUN), making nature, environmental and sustainability education accessible to everyone in the district and expanding offerings, often in the “Leafy Green Conope” (Blätterlaube), serving as a green classroom. The community garden won the gold plaque for near-natural gardening in 2024.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The *Berlin-Brandenburg Institute for Biodiversity Research (BBIB)* on the Berlin-Dahlem campus bridges interdisciplinary spatial scales and biological systems that are usually considered in isolation in biodiversity research.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The Master's program Biodiversity, Evolution, and Ecology equips students with knowledge and skills for careers in biodiversity and ecological research. Courses were taught on biodiversity on campus and biodiversity in cities on an international level. The University Teaching Day also took place in 2024 on the topic of biodiversity and education for sustainable development.





## PROMOTE JUST, PEACEFUL, AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Freie Universität embraces a whole institution approach, integrating sustainability management across the university. Participatory methods such as working groups, educational programs, and idea competitions provide diverse engagement opportunities for various stakeholder groups.

A central instrument is the Ideas and Innovations Management that allows students and staff to pursue their innovative project ideas to make a direct contribution to the goals of the university's Climate Emergency Declaration. In 2023 five project teams were funded and implemented their ideas with a focus on campus biodiversity.

Freie Universität promotes the democratic exchange within its community in times of poly-crisis. 40,000 people from over 150 countries and many different origins as well as cultural and religious backgrounds study, teach, and work at Freie Universität Berlin. Antisemitism, racism, and discrimination have no place at Freie Universität. After the attacks on Israel in October 2023 FU Berlin launched a series: Debate, Discuss, eliberate: The Middle East in Focus.



### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

The research project *Discursive conditions of radical politics: Dynamics of (non)violent escalation during the 2nd wave of the Arab Spring* coordinated at the Center for interdisciplinary peace and conflict research explores the new spaces of radical politics in Algeria, Lebanon, and Sudan in an interdisciplinary perspective and through a mixed-method approach attuned to the interaction processes between regimes and their contenders.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The course *Borders. Concepts, Perceptions, and Experiences in Global History* offered by the Department of History and Cultural Studies interrogates historically different meanings of borders and their shifting functions, examines the main historiographical debates about "frontiers" and "borderlands," and assesses the impact that shifting border regimes had on the lives of people.



## REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Following its mission as an international network university, Freie Universität Berlin actively participates in various sustainability-related university networks. For instance, it is a long-standing member of the International Sustainable Campus Network and supports its work with a membership on the Advisory Committee and a Senior Fellowship for Network Engagement Strategy and Communications. In 2023 the university proclaimed 2024 the Year of Biodiversity and thereby also deepened its engagement with international partners in the network "Nature Positive Universities", established by the UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal (Canada).



Freie Universität Berlin leads the Sustainability Focus Area in Una Europa, a European university alliance with 11 partners that share the vision to create a European university for exceptional teaching and research. In 2023 FU Berlin coordinated two workshops on Sustainability Governance and Student Engagement in the framework of the Una Europa General Assembly at the University of Leiden. The team published respective reflection papers after the event to share with the wider community. In 2024 the exchange focused on thematic sessions featuring sustainable mobility and biodiversity.

### SPOTLIGHT RESEARCH

Intact natural capital permanently provides services that are valuable for people. The social values of natural capital are still not completely known and subject to great uncertainty. The research project *ValuGaps* develops methods to close information gaps, to deal with uncertainties, and to bring together existing knowledge in such a way that decision-makers can apply it practically.

### SPOTLIGHT TEACHING

The course *Project Management in International Development* in the Department of Political and Social Sciences equips students with the knowledge and skills to work in the field of international (development) cooperation or in internationally oriented civil society organizations. Students reflect on positionality, ethical research questions and learn research-based. Theoretical and methodological approaches from the field of development policy and ethnographic/social anthropological research are applied.

## Sustainable Development Goal Report 2024

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