

Sustainability Report 2023

University of Oulu

4 June 2024



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Introduction

Dear reader,

This is the first sustainability report of the University of Oulu. Its aim is to track our progress towards a more sustainable and responsible university in 2023. The report summarises our organisation's activities and efforts for sustainable development and operations in our three core functions of research, education and cooperation, as well as in our internal operations.

As stated in the title of our new strategy, which was updated in 2023, the positive impact or handprint of the university is global. Environmental, cultural, social and economic sustainability and responsibility are the starting point for everything we do. We strive to solve global challenges in our own areas of expertise; for example, to mitigate climate change and safeguard biodiversity.

The University of Oulu is committed to operating sustainably and promoting the UN's goals of sustainable development through research and education. Our research units selected the UN Sustainable Development Goals that the research aims to promote in the previous Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). At the university level, the SDGs that our research aims to have the greatest impact on are 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and 13 (Climate Action).

As a university organisation, our role extends beyond our own organisation and our influence is broad. We have a special responsibility to promote sustainability and responsibility. Furthermore, sustainability challenges cannot be solved alone. The University of Oulu is part of the Climate Leadership Coalition (CLC) corporate network, and we cooperate closely with other Finnish universities, facilitated by of Finnish Universities Rectors' Council UNIFI ry.

The effects of climate change are faster and stronger in the Arctic region and northern Finland than in the rest of the world. For this reason, it is especially important that we, as a scientific university in the Nordics, create new knowledge and offer science-based education to build a more sustainable world.

A warm thank you to all members of our university community who work every day to promote sustainability and responsibility. Everyone's contribution is important in building a better world for the next generations.

Jouko Niinimäki, Rector



2023 highlights

In 2023...



We joined the Sustainability Studies Network, through which our students can take courses in sustainability and responsibility at different universities (including universities of applied sciences)



A wide range of courses was offered to all university students in Sustainable Development minor



We piloted employee training in sustainable development for our personnel



Thinking and Talking About Climate MOOC



New profiling initiatives Frontiers of Arctic and Global Resilience and Hydrogen Future as A Climate Change Solution launched



We introduced an employment bicycle benefit that enables more sustainable commuting



Renewal of bicycle parks



We compiled the report “Towards calculating the University of Oulu’s nature footprint”



We recruited a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Specialist



In December, we approved the new strategy “Our Northern Handprint is Global”

Research

In accordance with its strategy, the University of Oulu is committed to promoting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) through its research. In accordance with the University's Action Plan on Sustainability and Responsibility, which was published in 2021, research activities are specifically focused on solving major sustainability challenges. The University of Oulu's new profiling initiatives, Frontiers of Arctic and Global Resilience (FRONT) and Hydrogen Future as A Climate Change Solution (H2Future) were launched in 2023. FRONT strengthened the University of Oulu's resilience research by increasing interdisciplinary and international research collaboration. The H2Future project recruited new tenure track professors and supported the work of researchers at the University of Oulu with a number of funding opportunities. At the end of the year, the University received a decision on the Digital Waters flagship from the Research Council of Finland, which aims to safeguard water resources with digital twins.

Of the profiling projects that were launched in previous years, Biodiverse Anthropocenes has brought together 121 scientists from different disciplines to investigate the threat to planetary sustainability and biodiversity loss that threatens well-being. More researchers were recruited in 2023, and the programme has collaborated with, for example, the World Wildlife Fund, WWF. The InStreams research community focuses on interdisciplinary research on inorganic materials and side streams, as well as on sustainable value chains, with a specific link to the UN Sustainable Development Goals 9, 7, 12 and 6. InStreams has also collaborated with several major companies, such as Neste, Outokumpu and Metsä Group.

The University of Oulu has achieved excellent results in the EU's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme. Horizon Europe is a framework programme for research and innovation focusing on green transition, digitalisation and strengthening European sustainability. In total, we received over EUR 58 million in funding during the programme period that started in 2021. A total of 102 projects have received funding (as of 2024 March). In 2023, we were Finland's most successful university in obtaining Pillar II (Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness) funding. The majority of the projects awarded to the University of Oulu are focused on health, resilience, the twin transition and the elimination of greenhouse gas emissions.

Case Study: Kvantum Institute – Exploring Geographical Mismatch Between Supply and Demand of Ecosystem Services Using Big and Open Data

Human welfare relies on the availability of ecosystem services. Mapping can be used to illustrate and quantify the geographical mismatch between places where ecosystems' produce services and the location where people use them. Dr. Janne Alahuhta and his colleagues in Physical Geography Research Group are carrying out a project to assess the availability of ecosystem services (ES) at high latitudes using novel Geographic Information System-based accessibility methods at multiple spatial and temporal scales in terrestrial systems. The study addresses the mismatch between ES supply and demand, which is crucial for maintaining ecological balance and human well-being. By analyzing massive data sets, this project aims to understand how well people can access ES and how species movement between supply and demand areas affects ecosystem functioning and further ES production. It focuses on key natural resources like timber and examines the real-time use of cultural ES.

The project's findings will help to inform sustainable use of ES and policy actions. So far, the project has mapped temporal variations in forest ES supply and demand across Europe between years 2008 and 2018. In addition, one finding of the work is that long-term changes in vascular plant communities are reflected in the abundance of pollinator-dependent and pollen-nectar plants.



SDG 3 Good health and well-being
SDG 15 Life on land



Case Study: Kvantum Institute – Interacting Processes in the Arctic Reindeer Systems Experiencing Rapid Climate Change

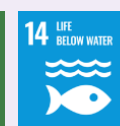
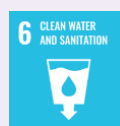
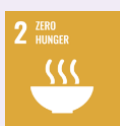
The north is changing rapidly compared to what it was just a few decades ago. Weather and climate are more unpredictable, variable, and extreme in summer and winter; especially as more precipitation is rain instead of snow, across Fennoscandia. The “New North” is creating difficulties for rural communities and for those who keep reindeer, such as the Sámi and the reindeer herders of the districts throughout the region who want to preserve a culture and a lifestyle that they greatly value and hope to pass on to future generations. Prof. and UArctic Research Chair, Jeff Welker and his Arctic Ecology and Biochemistry research group have developed and implemented a comprehensive framework and research initiative for understanding northern ungulate systems amidst the changing climate. The project involves experts and stakeholders, including the Sámi and reindeer herders, to address the environmental and social challenges faced by these communities. The focus is on creating solutions and knowledge that can help mitigate the impact of climate change on reindeer systems, and on fostering resilience and adaptive capacity in reindeer husbandry. The project emphasizes the importance of reindeer to the Sámi culture and the need for adaptive strategies to preserve their way of life. The research also extends to understanding the dietary shifts in Svalbard reindeer, which have adapted to changing vegetation patterns due to warming climates.



SDG 3 Good health and well-being
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth
SDG 10 Reduced inequalities
SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities
SDG 13 Climate action
SDG 15 Life on land

CASE ICEBERG:

The ICEBERG project investigates the impact of pollution on Arctic ecosystems and communities. It focuses, in particular, on the stress factors caused by climate change. The project assesses the impact of pollution on the marine ecosystem, the food chain and human health. The project develops automated tools for detecting marine waste using drones, artificial intelligence and civic science. The ICEBERG project aims to diversify impact, risk and vulnerability assessments in cooperation with indigenous peoples and local communities in the Arctic region. The project works with local residents to plan pollution management strategies using scenario modelling. The consortium is coordinated by the University of Oulu and consists of a total of 16 partners from all over Europe. The funding for the project is almost EUR 6 million. Additional information: <https://arcticeberg.eu/project/>



SDG 2 No hunger
SDG 3 Good health and well-being
SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation
SDG 10 Reduced inequalities
SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities

SDG 13 Climate action
SDG 14 Life below water
SDG 15 Life on land
SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals



Education

The University of Oulu trains future pioneers to build a more sustainable, intelligent and humane world. Sustainable development is included in degree programmes in all fields, and all students have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in a multidisciplinary manner through optional courses and minor studies.

Sustainable development themes in degree programmes

Themes of sustainable development are included in all of the University of Oulu's degree programmes in some ways. Sustainable development is an essential part of the content in some degree programmes.

In natural science studies, including biology, chemistry and geography degree programmes, sustainable development themes such as biodiversity, people's role in the changing world and sustainable consumption of natural resources are a central part of the curriculum.

Education in the fields of technology and ICT focuses on topics such as the green transition, sustainable technological solutions and sustainable use of resources, as well as a wide range of digitalisation issues.

Fields of business, humanities and education studies at the University of Oulu also offer a wide range of studies, especially those related to social and economic sustainability, including gender studies, ethics of education and sustainable business.

Education in medicine and health and welfare addresses diversely human health and health care development, including sustainability and responsibility aspects.

Case:

In 2023, a total of 25 doctoral researchers joined the new I4WORLD doctoral programme, which focuses on environmental, economic and social sustainability. The researchers represent nine nationalities and different genders. The training programme uses novel imaging and characterisation methods to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals related to health, sustainable production, energy and ecosystems.



SDG 3 Good health and well-being
SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy
SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production

Minor studies and the cross-institutional networks

Sustainable Development minor (25 credits) is an interdisciplinary study module that is open to all degree students and provided in collaboration between all eight faculties. In the academic year 2023–2024, a total of 83 courses were included in the selection of minor studies, 46 of which were the University of Oulu's own and 37 were organised through cross-institutional networks. The courses are grouped into three dimensions: environmental-ecological, economic-technical and socio-cultural sustainability, based on the key topics of the courses. The minor includes one mandatory introduction course (5 credits), in addition to which the student must study at least 5 ECTS credits in each dimension of sustainability.

The University of Oulu is also a member of several cross-institutional networks, with courses that focus on a wide range of responsibility, sustainability and environmental topics. Through these networks, students can study courses at other universities and deepen their knowledge of sustainability and responsibility, even in subjects that are not directly covered by the University of Oulu.

In spring 2023, the University of Oulu became a new member of the Finnish Sustainability Studies Network. The University offered a total of 9 courses to the network for the academic year 2023–2024. During the academic year, a total of 22 students from the other partner institutes applied to study at the University of Oulu through the network. In addition, the cooperation with the Biodiversity Education Network, Climate University and UniPID networks continued in 2023.

Case:

In the spring semester 2023, the University of Oulu's study programme included the independent Thinking and Talking about Climate MOOC (2 credits), which was developed in collaboration with the University of Oulu and the City of Oulu. The course is available to the University's own students, and to anyone interested in the subject free of charge through the Open University. In 2023, a total of 86 students or 55.8 per cent of those who started the course completed the course, which is a good percentage for MOOC studies. The course approaches climate change from the unusual perspective of the emotions related to it and how to recognize them. In addition to recognizing climate emotions, the student gets to practise constructive climate communication in dialogic games, where they discuss course topics with climate avatars created for the course. The course also provides tools for maintaining climate hope and dealing with one's own climate emotions. In late 2023, the University started preparing to offer the course in English to reach a larger number of students.



SDG 3 Good health and well-being
SDG 4 Quality education
SDG 13 Climate action



Carbon footprint and campus

In 2023, the University of Oulu's carbon footprint was 12,665 tCO₂ e. The footprint decreased from the reference year by 33.6 per cent (19,072 tCO₂ e in 2019). The University of Oulu aims to reduce emissions by 50 per cent from the reference year 2019 by 2025. Figure 1 presents the components of the carbon footprint for 2023. Figure 2 presents a comparison of the carbon footprint between 2019 and 2023.

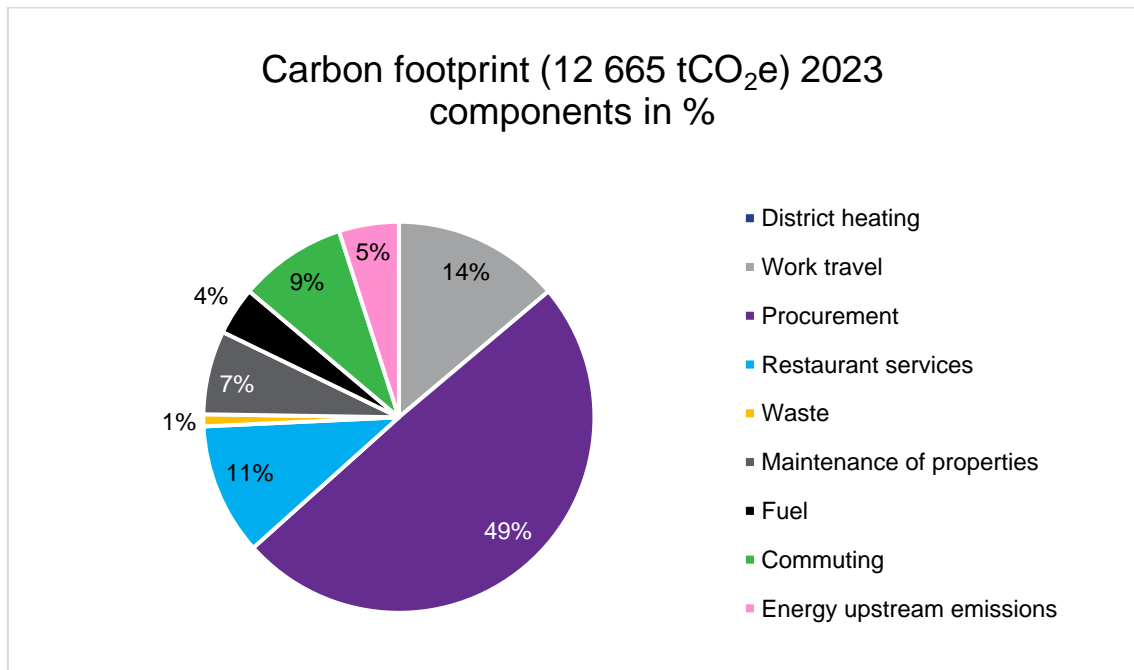


Figure 1: The components of the carbon footprint for 2023.

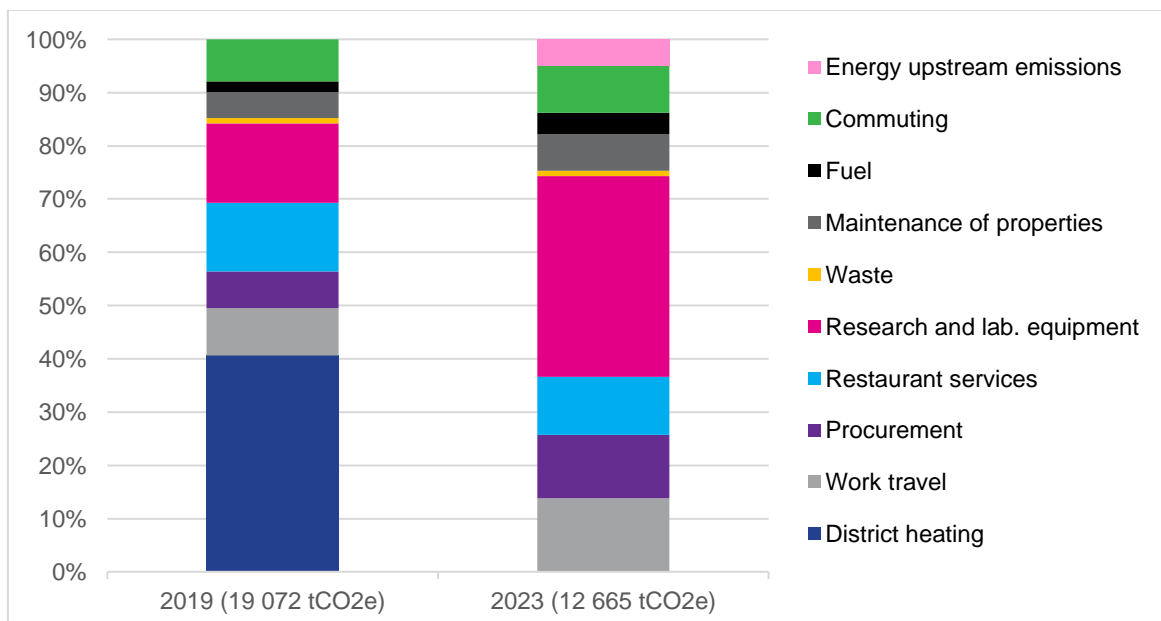


Figure 2: Comparison of the carbon footprint between 2019 and 2023.

Scope 1 emissions in 2023 were 577 tCO₂e. Emissions grew by 9.7 per cent from 2019. Each area of Scope 1 emissions increased slightly, there was no significant increase in emissions in any of the individual areas.

Scope 2 emissions decreased by almost 100 per cent in 2023 compared to 2019. In 2023, the University's Scope 2 emissions were 577 tCO₂e. The significant reduction in emissions is explained by the fact that, in 2023, the main campuses in Oulu were heated by carbon-neutral district heating with guarantees of origin. Therefore, its emission factor is 0. In addition to district heating, the University's electricity is emission-free and produced using renewable energy sources. The property owner, Suomen yliopistokiinteistöt (SYK Oy), has used emissions offsetting of its properties in previous years.

District heating consumption at the Linnanmaa campus decreased by 18.9 per cent from 2019 in 2023. The change can probably be explained by successful energy saving measures. No significant reduction in heat consumption was observed at Kontinkangas campus. Figures 3 and 4 present a comparison of the electricity and heat consumption at campuses between 2019 and 2023. In 2023, commuting (Scope 3) emissions were 1,772 tCO₂e. Emissions grew by 8.3 per cent from 2019.

As part of the work of the Carbon Footprint Working Group in 2023, the University mapped out opportunities for calculating the University's nature footprint, as it did not yet have clear nature footprint targets. To support the decision-making process, the research team of the Geographical Research Unit compiled a report that defined the alternatives for the different methods, limitations and result utilisation. The report also included recommendations and examples on how to promote biodiversity in the University's operations and purchases. The report recommends that the nature impacts of the University of Oulu's activities are investigated and that the University applies to become a member of the Nature Positive Universities network.

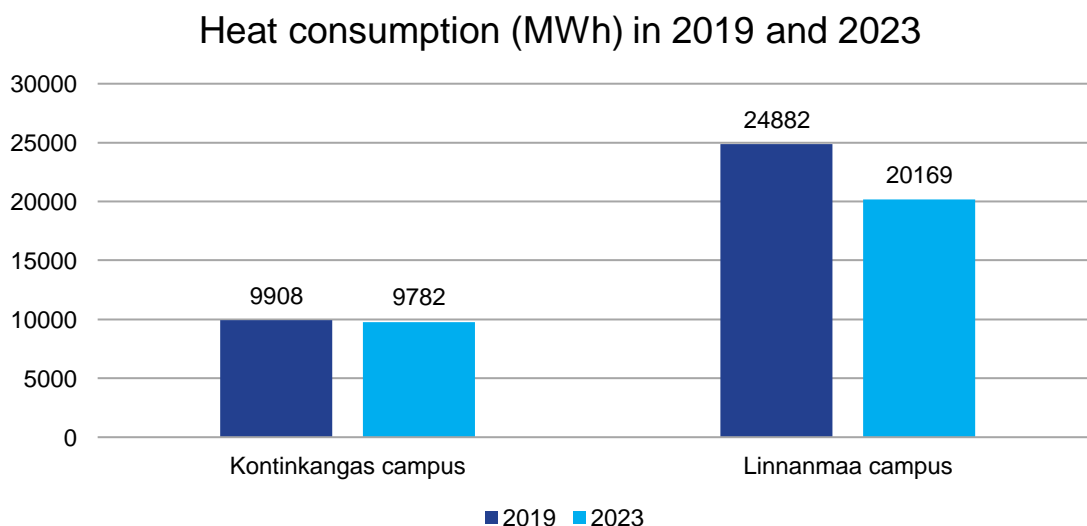


Figure 3: District heat consumption at the Oulu campuses in 2019 and 2023.

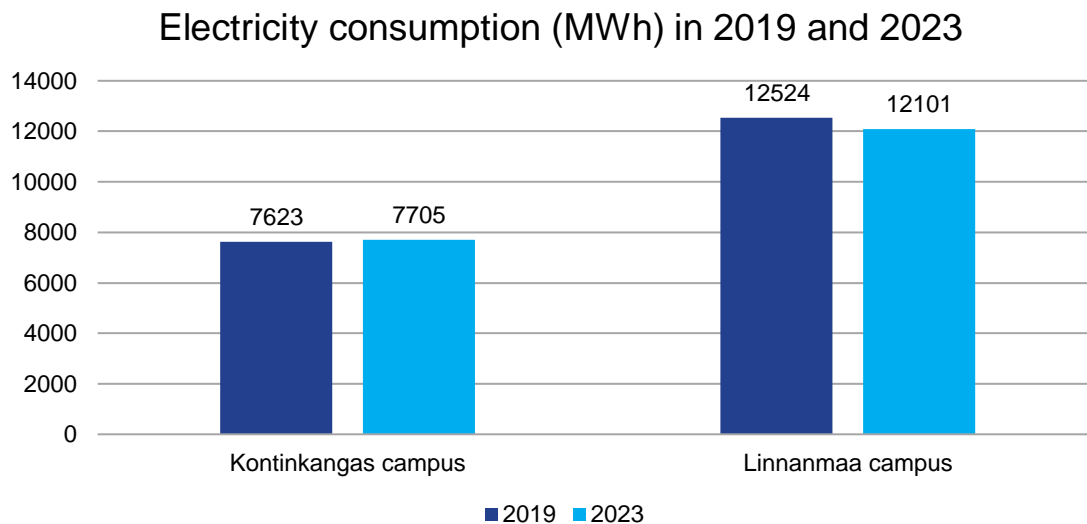


Figure 4: Electricity consumption at the Oulu campuses in 2019 and 2023.



Commuting 2023: 17,190,550 air km. 428.96 times around the world! Emissions 1,286 tCO_{2e}.

Case:

The model used to calculate the carbon footprint was developed by researchers at the University of Oulu. A carbon footprint working group was appointed to support the development work, comprising experts from different faculties and service units. The term of office of the working group was from 1 November 2020 to 31 December 2023. In addition to the calculation model that meets the GHG Protocol, five Master's thesis, one scientific publication and several research reports on different areas of the carbon footprint were completed during the term. The results of the Carbon Footprint Working group serve as an excellent example of how research can develop the University's own operations and produce tools to support daily activities.

<https://www oulu.fi/en/projects/carbon-footprint-university-oulu>

Case:

At the end of 2023, the Kontinkangas campus switched to producing the steam required for its operations with electricity instead of oil. The change will result in annual savings of approx.

111,970 litres of oil, which corresponds to the consumption of 48 oil-heated detached houses. The annual emission reduction is approximately 300 tCO₂e.

Case:

The University of Oulu introduced an employee bicycle benefit. The impact of the benefit on employee commuting and the resulting carbon footprint will be monitored in the coming years. During 2023, the property owner also made improvements to bicycle parking on the campuses.



Info: Scope 1 emissions include the use of cars (vehicles of service units and faculties), emissions from steam production (oil), emissions from oil-heated properties (Oulanka Research Station and Sodankylä separate unit) and emissions from refrigerant leaks. Scope 2 emissions are emissions from the use of properties (electricity, heating, water). Suomen yliopistokiinteistöt (SYK Oy) uses emissions offsetting for its properties.

Info: The most common method for company-level emission calculation is the Greenhouse Gas protocol (GHG). The carbon footprint calculation can either be restricted to the company's own operations only, including direct emissions from its own operations (Scope 1) and emissions from the production of purchased energy (Scope 2), or it can cover the indirect emissions (Scope 3) across the value chain.



Procurement

In 2023, we aimed to prioritise responsibility in purchases and procurement categories where its impact is high. The procurement unit has studied, for example, the EU's Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria and tries to apply them to procurement, whenever possible. The sustainability aspect should be taken into account as early as possible during the planning of the procurement, which is why we ask the subject matter experts to take environmental, social and economic responsibility into account in the procurement memorandum in purchases exceeding EUR 30,000 (VAT 0%). The University is also involved in Hansel's joint procurement arrangements, where the different dimensions of sustainability play an important role.

Procurement is always based on needs and unnecessary purchases are avoided. Furniture is recycled whenever possible, and the disposal of packaging materials is a mandatory requirement in competitive tendering. We strive to favour energy-efficient and low-waste products whose environmental impact is assessed through a product life cycle assessment wherever possible. Instead of leasing, the University purchases IT equipment with a longer-term service device concept, which extends its lifecycle and enables users to recycle the equipment. The possibility of joint use is requested when planning the procurement, and, for example, at the data centre, the equipment of the University and the University of Applied Sciences is in the same room where the students can use them. In the tendering for restaurant services, for example, a traffic light model has been proposed to make it easier to choose an environmentally friendly lunch option.

In the case of larger purchases, we have asked the candidates to specify the sustainability principles applied in their organisation. Sustainability requirements can be added to the tender documents, for example, in the eligibility requirements of the candidate, the minimum requirements or the contract terms.

As concrete measures in 2023, we added a section on sustainability challenges and solutions to the presentation memorandum. We compiled a short information package on the University's intranet about responsible procurement, which can be accessed via the link in the presentation memo. We included a voluntary description of responsibility principles in tenders for large procurements. A member of the procurement team was appointed to develop the responsibility of procurement.

Challenges related to developing responsible procurement include tight timelines for procurement processes, obtaining information about supply chains, limited supply in specific procurements and monitoring the carbon footprint of procurement. Despite the challenges, we focus on areas where we can make a difference in terms of sustainability from the very beginning of the procurement process.

SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT EXAMPLE CASES

A number of sustainability requirements and recommendations were set in the tendering of restaurant services. The candidates are required to offer vegetarian food every day, prefer local food and domestic fish, sell out leftover food, develop vegetarian options in catering, arrange food waste scales on the serving lines, present the carbon footprint per serving using a traffic light model on the menu, and publish its carbon footprint and food waste reports. In addition, service providers participating in the tender should produce 90 per cent of their services in-house, be 100 per cent Finnish and provide a description of how they take sustainability into account.



SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production
SDG 13 Climate action

The sourcing of computers was changed to a service device concept, which extends the life cycle of laptops from three to four years. The life cycle of workstations is five years. Second-hand service devices may be used on a case-by-case basis, but they are of course reinstalled and cleaned.



SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production

In cleaning services and furniture contracts that are based on earlier tendering that is still in effect, sustainability has been taken into account, for example, in the minimum level of wages, remuneration of employees, useful life of furniture (durability, reparability, availability of spare parts, ease of maintenance), information on the supply chain of materials and commitment to the UN's "Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights". There are also a number of environmental requirements for furniture products.



SDG 1 No poverty
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth



Investment

The University of Oulu’s investment activities must be based on our values. Our investment partners must take sustainability into account and we require our investment managers to sign the UN Principles for Responsible Investment. Responsibility is a key factor when making new investment decisions.

The University of Oulu is committed to responsible investment, and responsibility questions are an important part of the overall assessment of investment success. Sustainability reporting to the University Board of Directors is carried out in conjunction with the interim financial statements and financial statements, as part of ESG reporting. The fund managers report to the University of Oulu on responsible investment as part of their monthly portfolio reporting. Responsible investment practices are documented in the asset management agreements.

The University of Oulu put its comprehensive financial management services out to tender in 2022, changing the number of its financial managers from three to two. Responsibility was an important metric in the tendering process. In the two-manager model, the number of funds also decreased significantly.

In terms of asset management portfolios, government bonds in developing markets were abandoned. One objective was to improve the ESG score of the portfolio. The biggest challenge is unlisted private equity, which accounts for around 10 per cent of the University of Oulu’s portfolio. Private equity investments do not yet provide ESG data to the same extent as investments on the listed market.

At the end of 2023, the University of Oulu’s investment portfolio had an ESG rating of 7.1 and ranked in the top third (“forerunner”). Although the ESG score decreased slightly as a result of the change in methodology by MSCI during the summer, each individual component (E,S,G) developed in the right direction (Figure 5). The downward trend in carbon risk*, in particular, was significant during 2023 (Figure 6). The carbon risk of the University’s portfolio on 31 December 2023 was 86.8 (year-on-year 31 December 2022: 127.3).

* *Weighted average of the carbon intensities of holdings. Measures carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions (Scope 1+2) in relation to the company’s turnover.*

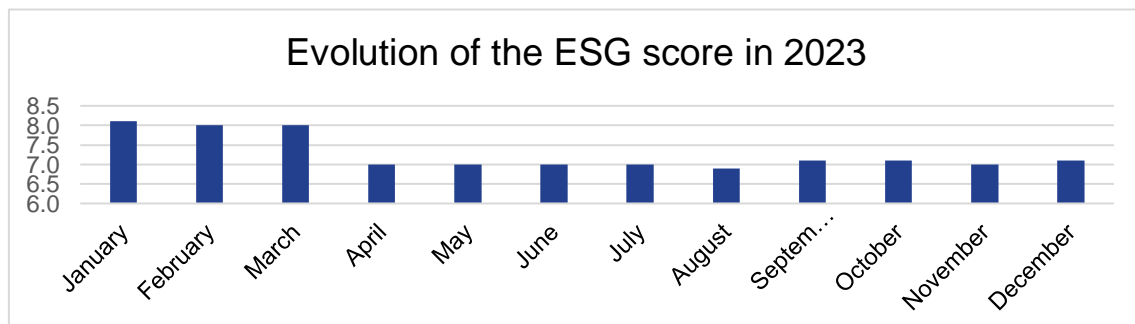


Figure 5: Evolution of the University of Oulu’s ESG score in 2023

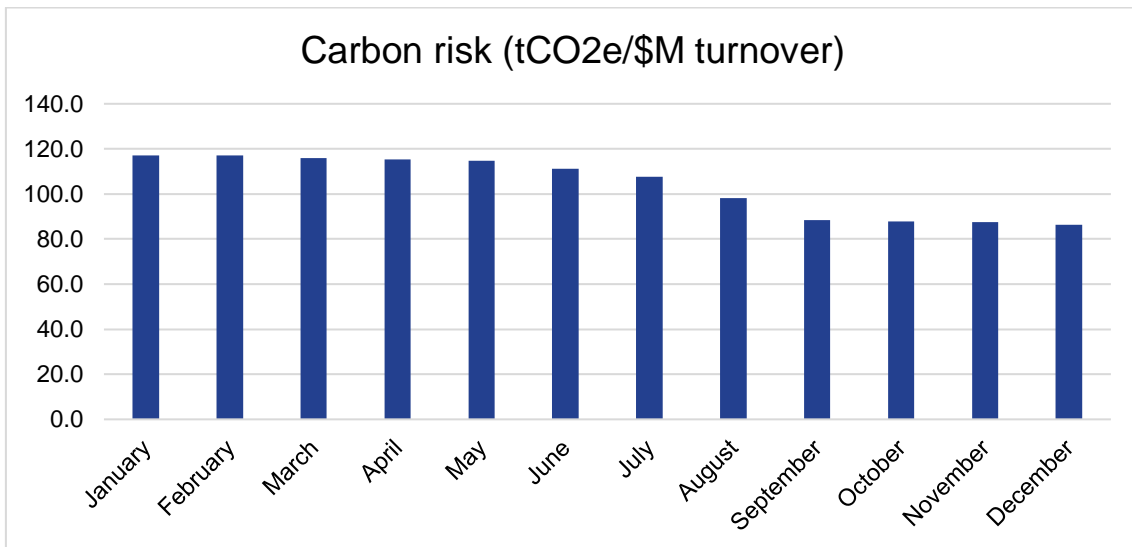


Figure 6: Evolution of the University of Oulu's carbon risk in 2023

Interaction and events

In 2023, several events were held at the University of Oulu on the themes of sustainability and responsibility. The University of Oulu's Sustainability Forum served as a meeting place for members of the university community. In 2023, its topics included art and science as a force for change in sustainability, interdisciplinary problem solving and ICT responsibility from a multidisciplinary perspective. As part of the interdisciplinary Brown Bag lunch seminars, events were held on the impact of climate change in the Arctic region and the consideration of biodiversity in the supply chains of companies. The University of Oulu Science Garden served as a meeting place for sustainable development. Family science events in the Science Garden attracted nearly a thousand visitors.

UniOulu Science Day, held in April 2023, brought together members of the university community to promote interdisciplinary research to discuss topics such as climate change, arctic issues, human-driven digital futures and digitalisation as a health promoter. In October, the University of Oulu hosted the international (Un)Common Worlds III conference on research on the relationship between humans and animals. In November, the annual Festival of Cultures gave us the opportunity to celebrate the diversity of our international university community and get to know the cultures of our colleagues and peers (Image 1).



Image 1: Festival of Cultures celebrated the diverse community of the University of Oulu in November 2023

The University of Oulu is a member of a number of national and international networks promoting sustainability. In 2023, we joined the Sustainability Studies Network. We participated in the activities of UNIFI ry's (Finnish Universities Rectors' Council) Sustainability and Responsibility Working Group and in the follow-up work on the Theses on sustainable development and responsibility. We were part of the Nordic Sustainable Development Solutions Network Northern Europe (SDSN NE). We are an active member of the Finnish University Partnership for International Development UniPID, and Climate University, offering courses to students from both our own and other universities through the networks. We also participated in the Climate Leadership Coalition, the largest corporate network on climate in the Nordic region.

In 2023, the University of Oulu participated in the university rankings for sustainability and responsibility, QS Sustainability Rankings and Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. In THE Impact Rankings, our overall score remained the same as last year, 401–600. We were ranked in 12 Sustainable Development Goals; six of them remained on the same level as last year, five increased and one decreased. We were the most successful in SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), where we ranked 94th. In the QS Sustainability rankings, we improved our scores in *Environmental Research*, *Health & Wellbeing*, *Impact of Education*, *Equality* and *Employability and Outcomes*.

Case Study:

Researchers from the University of Oulu have actively contributed to the sustainable development of the ICT sector by emphasising environmental, social and economic sustainability aspects. Examples of social impact through stakeholder collaboration include research-based opinions on requests for opinions from European regulatory authorities on environmental sustainability indicators for mobile communication systems and contributions to international 6G development. As a result, sustainability aspects are included in the ITU's 6G Recommendation as a guiding principle for development.

Further information: Marja Matinmikko-Blue, Research Director, Infotech Oulu



SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals



Equality and non-discrimination

During 2023, the University of Oulu strengthened its work on equality and non-discrimination through internal development initiatives and by expanding its national and international networks. A new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Specialist started work in January 2023. The new role is based on the aim of developing the University's equality and non-discrimination work in an even more coordinated manner across unit and faculty boundaries. Another aim is to strengthen the sense of community and belonging in our international community. The preparation of the DEI expert's role was also based on cooperation within the European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) to strengthen diversity competence as part of European universities. During the first year, awareness of the work has been raised in all faculties. The new role also received positive attention in the media.

During 2023, several events and training sessions on equality and non-discrimination were held at the University of Oulu. Examples of the events:

- Diversity in the university community event at Linnanmaa campus in February 2023. The event included a lecture and a panel discussion.
- Anti-racism week in March 2023, featuring Iranian New Year (approximately 200 participants) and Finding Finns pop-up event
- Training for equality and non-discrimination contact persons in May 2023 (approx. 10 participants)
- Three equality and non-discrimination morning coffees in May 2023 (approx. 30–40 participants)
- Oulu Pride collaboration, participation in the parade and park party in August 2023
- Bring your children to work event in November 2023 (approx. 270 participants)

The University of Oulu awards an annual equality and non-discrimination prize for distinguished work on the promotion of equality and non-discrimination. The 2023 equality and non-discrimination prize was awarded to University Lecturer Aira Huttunen for strengthening the voice of a gender minority through research.

During 2023, the University of Oulu prepared its new equality and diversity plan (2024–2025). The Equality and Diversity Committee involved the university community and the University’s stakeholders in the preparation of the plan in two different stages through online surveys. The feedback and ideas were used to select measures for the new equality and diversity plan.

During 2023, the University of Oulu continued its activities in the UNIC network focusing on diversity themes (Superdiversity Academy) and the Horizon 2020 project (Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together). In 2023, the University of Oulu joined the national DEI network of higher education institutions. The aim of the national DEI network is to share good practices on equality and non-discrimination between Finnish universities.

Case:

Global wars and conflicts have been visible in our multicultural university community more intensely than ever before. Conflicts are extremely difficult and daunting, especially for students and staff who have connections to the crisis areas. In 2023, the University of Oulu established a working group and an operating model to respond to global crisis situations. The University has organised community events to support the well-being of students and staff in unexpected crisis situations. Peer support events were organised in response to the unrest in Iran, the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria and the war in Gaza. Community events do not replace healthcare or mental health services or counselling, but they can serve as first aid in the event of a sudden community crisis.



SDG 3 Good health and well-being
SDG 5 Gender equality
SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions

University of Oulu

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