

# Sustainability and responsibility

2025



UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU

## Introduction

**The Sustainability Report of the University of Turku provides an overview of how the University promotes sustainability and responsibility through research and education, and implements them in collaboration with wider society.**

The report brings together examples of the University's activities from the perspectives of environmental, social, administrative responsibility, and cultural sustainability, linking them to the goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a responsible operator, the University of Turku approaches international frameworks critically, analytically, and constructively. It will contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda by focusing on its review and further development from an academic perspective.

The strategic goal of the University of Turku is to expand its positive impact and enable a sustainable future. The University produces scientific knowledge to address major societal challenges and educates future professionals and experts who have the ability and will to build a more sustainable and responsible world. The achievement of these goals will be supported by multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, and openness – the key strengths of the University of Turku.

Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity increase the ability to find solutions to complex problems. High-quality basic research and a broad multidisciplinary profile support the sustainable development of innovations and solutions, biodiversity, health and well-being across economic, legal, pedagogical and cultural contexts. The University also invests in responsible digitalisation and technological advancements.

The University of Turku is strongly committed to the principles of open science and research. The open dissemination of research brings significant benefits to society and strengthens the role of the University as a responsible institution. In the 2024 national review of open science, the University of Turku was ranked at the highest level. The review looked at the operational culture of open science, open publishing, open learning, open data, and open infrastructures.

This report presents the University's work on sustainability and responsibility through case examples and qualitative and quantitative indicators.

The Sustainability Report of the University of Turku is available at [\*\*Sustainability and responsibility at the University of Turku\*\*](#), and it is updated regularly.

Turku, 15 May 2025  
**Marjo Kaartinen**  
Rector

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# Ecological responsibility

Ecological responsibility refers to actions aimed at minimising the harmful environmental impacts of human activity and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. It includes measures to protect the environment and biodiversity and to reduce emissions that accelerate climate change.



Ecologically responsible action takes into account both the direct environmental impacts of an organisation's own operations and its indirect impacts, for example through supply chains.

In 2018, the University of Turku committed to becoming carbon neutral by the end of 2025. Although this target will not be met without carbon offsetting, it has enabled identifying the main sources of emissions and taking measures to reduce the carbon footprint.

At the University of Turku, ecological responsibility is realised through education and research. It is also reflected in practical measures on campus, in the daily life of the community, and in the cooperation with stakeholders. The University's education and research in particular can be seen as increasing the University's carbon handprint.

## We provide educational content to solve environmental problems

The University of Turku trains experts in eight faculties, which offer hundreds of sustainability-related courses to students every year. In the 2022 evaluation, 670 courses offered within degree programmes included sustainability-related content, which represents approximately one fifth of the total course offer. All faculties offer sustainability-related courses, and their share in each curriculum period is monitored. In addition, training is provided for teaching personnel to identify these contents.

The Sustainable Development Studies is a multidisciplinary and internationally recognised minor subject study module, which is open to all degree and exchange students at the University of Turku. The module has regularly received positive feedback from students, and its demand has been consistent year after year.



An example of sustainability-focused education open to all is a course on global environmental issues (Maaailmanlaajuiset ympäristöongelmat, taught in Finnish), which covers topics such as population growth, global land use, climate and air protection, sufficiency of natural resources, water and food production issues, and the environmental impact of energy production.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**



## Responding to challenges of biodiversity loss through multidisciplinary research collaboration

The University of Turku, together with the University of Jyväskylä, the Natural Resources Institute of Finland, and LUT University, is participating in the BIODIFUL research project funded by the Research Council of Finland. The aim is to create and equip a network of agents of change to facilitate the transformation towards biodiversity-respectful leadership in business, societal decision-making, and everyday life.

Much is already known in the natural sciences about the effects of biodiversity loss and the activities that cause it. Leadership research, on the other hand, has examined the pursuit of common goals, the process of enabling change, and the foundations of a good human life. However, we do not know what kind of leadership will enable a sustainable future, let alone one that respects nature. BIODIFUL combines these two areas of research to provide answers.

## We create impact for planetary well-being through societal dialogue

The University of Turku promotes nature positivity by providing information to support decision-making, by collaborating with business life, and by participating in national and international

networks. Representatives of the University of Turku actively participate in the hearings of parliamentary committees and appear in the media. A key objective of the cooperation with the University's strategic partners (since 2004) – Bayer Nordic SE, Meyer Turku Oy, the City of Turku, and Wärtsilä Corporation – is to promote green transition solutions. The University of Turku is also a founding member of the Nature Positive Universities network. This global university network aims to promote biodiversity research and education in higher education institutions, support nature restoration in the higher education sector, and deepen dialogue and knowledge sharing between universities.

To promote citizen science, the University organises scientific events for different audiences on its campuses, in the Botanical Garden, the Natural History Museum, the University's research stations in Seili and Kevo, and more widely on its campuses.

An example of a citizen science event is BioBlitz, which involves citizens mapping species with the help of experts. The first BioBlitz event took place in May 2022 on the University's main campus. Another similar event was organised by the Biodiversity Unit of the University of Turku in cooperation with the City of Turku in Europe's first biodiversity park in the Skanssi area of Turku in June and August 2024.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**







# Social responsibility

**Social responsibility means taking into account the impact of activities on people and society. It includes promoting fair and equal working conditions, respecting human rights, and ensuring equality and fair treatment.**



A socially responsible organisation seeks to make a positive impact on the surrounding community and promote the well-being of its employees.

The University of Turku promotes social responsibility by supporting the well-being and equality of its students and personnel and by investing in personnel expertise. The University also supports stable social development and equality, for example by producing social innovations and training experts and professionals who promote social responsibility through their activities.

## Strengthening equality and pluralism in our community

The University of Turku is committed to promoting equality and pluralism, and achieving equality is a shared responsibility of the entire University community. The Equality Plan of the University covers accessibility, barrier-free access, and the promotion of study and work well-being. The University promotes equality and non-discrimination in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and other determinants of diversity.

The University is building an inclusive organisational culture by providing training on this theme for both supervisors and the wider University community, as set out in the objectives of the University's Work community development plan. Training is provided, for example, through unit development days and workshops on equality, diversity, and inclusion. The workshops will also consider the creation and implementation of principles for a safer space to ensure that the University remains an open and inclusive learning and working environment for all.

Teaching and guidance are tailored to meet the needs of specific groups within the University community. For example, SIMHE (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education in Finland) services provide training and career guidance for immigrants, especially in questions related to higher education and employment. The services also include small group and individual Finnish language tuition and preparation for job search and language exams.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**





## We cater for a wide range of learning needs

The University of Turku aims to promote the integration of sustainable development into both general and discipline-specific studies and learning objectives across degree, postgraduate, and other forms of teaching, including continuous learning. Continuous learning opportunities from a variety of disciplines are available to everyone interested through open events, MOOCs, and open university studies. In 2024, Open University students completed a total of 56,813 credits. They were completed by 11,769 students, of which 8,490 were women.

**Open science** supports all aspects of responsibility, especially social, by providing equal access to scientific knowledge for different audiences. It promotes equality and supports stable social development. Openly available knowledge enables different operators in society to use research results in decision-making and to develop services that better respond to changing needs. The open science accelerator at the University of Turku is a meeting place for researchers and people interested in research.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**



## We connect with people interested in research in different forums, practical work, and longitudinal studies

Working towards a more sustainable world and making it visible is part of the University's social impact. The University of Turku is active in Finland through its research stations and is involved in significant cooperation with the general public and local communities.

Alumni are an important network of experts for the University, both in Finland and abroad. They are active in all areas of society and are therefore an important part of the University's dialogue with the rest of society. They have an important role in the mentoring programmes of the University of Turku, which support students' transition into professional life and researchers' and other staff members' professional development.

The open attractions run by the University of Turku and Turku University Foundation offer a memorable way to learn about research and the history of the attractions. The aim is to improve the accessibility of research and science, for example through events organised on weekdays. They offer children, young people, and anyone with an interest in knowledge the chance to explore the academic world. For example, in May 2023, the event with researchers of phonetics was focused on: Why does the tongue sometimes get all tangled up when trying to speak a new language? How do we learn a new language? What are speech sounds? What does speech look like? How do researchers analyse speech? The University of Turku and Turku City Theatre have also collaborated to organise the Akateeminen vartti (Finnish for an academic quarter) performance three times. In the performance, researchers from different disciplines take turns to take to the big stage to give a 15-minute dramatised mini-lecture on their research.



INVEST, short for Inequalities, Interventions and New Welfare State, is a joint research centre of the University of Turku and the National Institute for Health and Welfare. Several intervention programmes have been developed in the INVEST Research Flagship Centre: Opintokamu (Studypal), Voimaperheet (Strongest Families), and KiVa Antibullying Programme. The Centre participated in the scientific evaluation of the Finnish basic income experiment. The evaluation of the experiment provided information to support the reform of social security.



Since 2007, Steps to the Healthy Development and Well-being of Children (STEPS), a longitudinal study on the well-being of children and young people, has been interacting with citizens through research. The multidisciplinary study follows the growth and development of children from infancy to adulthood and includes around 1,800 children born in the Hospital District of Southwest Finland between 2008 and 2010, and their families.

### Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:





A woman with glasses and a striped shirt is working on a laptop in an office setting. The background is blurred, showing other people in the office. The text 'Financial and administrative responsibility' is overlaid on the image in a large, dark green, serif font.

# Financial and administrative responsibility

In the international Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) framework for assessing sustainability, governance stands for good governance, management, foresight, and leadership.

At the University of Turku, financial and administrative responsibility encompasses the financial responsibility that enables the University to fulfil its core missions as an organisation and a community, and influences the allocation of resources. Responsibility is also reflected in a commitment to good governance, such as involving students in the University's decision-making and activities. The Student Union is represented in the decision-making bodies in accordance with the University's Rules of Procedure, but it is also represented in preparatory working groups.

## Financial and administrative responsibility in procurement, investment and fundraising

**Procurement** is a significant part of the financial activities of the University of Turku. The University's Procurement Regulations require that all procurements are made in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, climate neutrality, and other responsible practices.

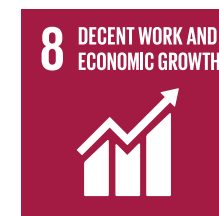
The responsibility of **investments** is actively monitored and asset managers are required to report regularly on ESG issues. The University is a member of the Finland's Sustainable Investment Forum (FINSIF) and adheres to the principles of responsible investment.

In its **fundraising**, the University of Turku follows strict ethical principles. All donations will be used in accordance with the donor's wishes to promote the University's purpose and long-term goals. Fundraising is carried out in a transparent manner and in compliance with laws and regulations. Communication and donation discussions respect confidentiality, data protection, and confidentiality rules.



Since 2018, the University of Turku has been a Fairtrade University committed to promoting ethical trade and developing its procurements to be more ethical. The Fairtrade working group of the University of Turku aims to raise awareness of the problems of international production chains and the importance of responsible consumption and fairer global trade.

Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:





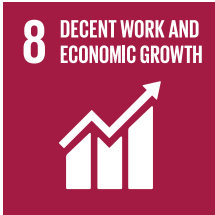
# Contributing to building sustainable governance and innovation

The University of Turku generates extensive expertise in governance and societal issues through education and research. The Centre for Parliamentary Studies at the University of Turku is a research unit studying Finnish democracy, parliamentarism and parliament as well as European integration. In addition to academic research, the Centre’s researchers actively contribute to society by engaging in public debate and providing expert commentary in the media on issues related to governance and politics. The Centre has carried out training for members of parliament. Between 2023 and 2024, the University of Turku issued a total of 25 expert statements to parliamentary committees. Over the years, parliamentary research has been presented in hearings before six different committees. Each year, the University responds to numerous statement requests (43 statements in 2024).

The University of Turku supports new business development and has, for example, increased the number of research-based patents. Like research conducted at the University, the management of intellectual property rights related to research is also reflected as a form of capital that the University contributes to society. For example, Cleantech & environment is one of the University’s three technology and IP portfolios.

Follow-up data (UTU Technology Transfer Office)	2023	2024
Idea and innovation propositions	141	128
Invention disclosures	35	33
University acquired the rights	16	11
New priority applications	4	7
New granted patents	32	21
Patent portfolio/Patent families	51	48
Patent applications	312	321
Granted patents	152	168
Sales and licensing agreements	79	87
Transnational education	51	49
Start-up/Spin-off companies	4	4

Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:



## Tools are provided for both business decision-making and youth work - multidisciplinary provides answers to the wicked problems of our time

Faculties engage in discipline-specific problem-solving, while the multidisciplinary themes of the University's strategy serve as a valuable asset. The wide-ranging research at the University of Turku approaches sustainability and responsibility from multiple perspectives. Partly examining the theme as a whole, but typically focusing on a specific aspect of sustainability from the perspective of the discipline's particular expertise.

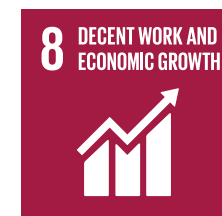
The NwoW project of the Centre for Collaborative Research (CCR) at Turku School of Economics is focused on the dynamics of responsible business. Ecological, social, and economic sustainability are viewed as enablers of the effective development and assessment of critical meta-skills in professional life.

The Centre for Education and Research on Social and Health Services is a collaborative platform of all the faculties of the University of Turku. The Centre supports the skills of professionals and the development of services in social welfare, health care, teaching, and education by offering multidisciplinary education to the University's students and open university education to anyone interested. An example of a co-creation research project between child welfare social work and adolescent psychiatry was the LANUPS project. The aim was to identify the services received and the service needs of the young people who had been involved in these services.



The Nutrition and Food Research Centre enables close dialogue and collaboration between food, health, and medicine. Their research interests include on food-related behaviour, food properties, and metabolism and health. More specifically, they focus on sustainable dietary choices, nutrient intake, the gut microbiota, and their associated metabolic and clinical health effects across the human lifespan. This will contribute to the development of food production to meet global challenges.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**





# Cultural sustainability and interaction

The cultural dimension of responsibility refers to the actions and principles that promote cultural diversity, preservation, and development.



It relates to the ability of an organisation or community to recognise and value different cultures, traditions, values, and identities. Cultural sustainability is about preserving cultural aspects such as languages, traditions, and customs. But sustainable development requires changes in everyday life and mindsets. It is important to distinguish, within past and present practices, which features support overall sustainability as legacies for future generations, and to identify where the co-creation of entirely new sustainable legacies is still needed.

## We study and preserve the cultural memory of society

In line with its Cultural Policy, the University of Turku preserves and renews intangible cultural heritage, such as academic traditions, and supports student culture. Cultural memory and social change is one of the five multidisciplinary themes of the Strategy of the University of Turku. The University of Turku conducts extensive, critical and multidisciplinary research on cultural memory and its social connections, spanning from prehistoric times to futures research.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**

**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



## We work for sustainability at local and national level

Cooperation is often local. The higher education institutions in the Turku region – the University of Turku, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Åbo Akademi University, and Novia University of Applied Sciences – organise an annual joint sustainability event to bring together local experts, strengthen collaboration, raise awareness, and enhance the visibility of sustainability work carried out in higher education institutions.

The University of Turku is committed to the Climate City Contract of the City of Turku. In spring 2022, Turku was selected in the EU Mission “100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities”. All cities selected for the mission must conclude a Climate City Contract with the European Commission, which commits them to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

Collaborative sustainability-related development is also carried out between higher education institutions at the national level, coordinated by the Council of Rectors of Finnish Universities (UNIFI). UNIFI has developed a set of 12 theses on sustainable development and responsibility, divided under five different themes.

The University of Turku is part of the Climate Leadership Coalition (CLC) network that brings businesses together with academic experts to improve the knowledge and ability of both parties to work alone and together towards a low-carbon and more sustainable future.



Sustainable development is also a theme in the Turku Urban Research Programme between the City of Turku, the University of Turku, and Åbo Akademi University. Over the past five years, the Programme has funded projects on high-temperature heat pumps in urban energy production, the relationship between housing policy and climate policy, ecological compensation in the context of urban densification, circular economy innovations involving Turku's clay soil, the use of nudges to encourage more climate-friendly mobility choices, and the deepening of immigrants' relationship with nature.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**





## Global responsibility is ultimately the result of international cooperation

International cooperation often provides enhanced opportunities to promote societal well-being and support the prosperity of communities. For example, the University of Turku is part of the Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) network that influences national and international development policies and draws on the expertise and knowledge of its member universities.

The University of Turku and seven other universities form the European Campus of City-Universities, EC2U Alliance. The objective of the cooperation is to create a pan-European campus with a new model of quality education. Within the network's training content, for example, SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) is included in a master's programme of the same name.

The International Partnerships service coordinates several University-level projects and networks. These have included the Finland-Africa Platform for Innovation (FAPI) and Finland China Food and Health (FCFH), both global networks of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Internationalisation Programme.

Scholars at Risk (SAR) is committed to protecting researchers in need and promoting academic freedom and related values worldwide. The University of Turku promotes the same values and actively participates in the network and collaborates with the International Education Scholar Rescue Fund (IIE-SRF Alliance), which also promotes academic freedom and research.



The University of Turku has long been part of the World Bank-funded Resilience Academy project that collaborates with the Tanzanian government. The Resilience Academy aims to equip Tanzanian youth with the tools, knowledge, and skills to address major global resilience challenges and ensure sustainable urban development.

**Is linked, among others, to the following UN Sustainable Development Goals:**





## Monitoring of sustainability work

The indicators used to monitor sustainability work include the following.  
Monitoring targets will be developed for the next report and as needed.

Category	Indicator
Sustainability and responsibility in the University's education and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• number of thematically identified courses</li><li>• number of thematically identified research projects</li><li>• number of members in the UTUSustainability network</li></ul>
Ecological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• carbon footprint</li><li>• biodiversity footprint</li><li>• Action Plan for Sustainable Campus Life</li></ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• existence of policies</li><li>• personnel employed to promote them</li><li>• the proportion of women in personnel and students</li></ul>
Economic and administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ESG reporting on investment activities</li><li>• improving the efficiency of office procurements</li><li>• fundraising income</li></ul>
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• existence of a Cultural Policy</li><li>• visitor numbers at attractions</li><li>• number of international networks</li></ul>

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