

The Helmholtz Association's commitment to sustainable development

– confirmed by the General Assembly on 15 September 2020 –

Introduction

In the 21st century, humanity is facing many major global challenges including climate change, environmental degradation, the pandemic spread of infectious diseases, inequality, populism and anti-democracy, and competition over resources. To tackle these challenges together and preserve the ability of Earth's ecosystem to cope, the Member States of the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The political framework of the SDGs serves to ensure sustainable development in economic, social and ecological terms. The Helmholtz Association is fully committed to these goals, as encapsulated in our mission statement: The activities of the Helmholtz Association focus on securing the long-term foundations of human life, continually improving living conditions and preserving the environment for future generations. Our research activities and findings contribute towards achieving sustainability.

Self-concept

The large complex research infrastructures of the Helmholtz Association create the ideal conditions for researchers to work in an interdisciplinary manner and help forge solutions to global and social challenges through their cutting-edge research. The expertise, creativity and innovative power of our employees in research, administration and operations is our greatest asset, so we strive to create the circumstances in which they can develop their full potential. Other resources for research and operations are also used efficiently and processes are continually optimised with a view to making the Helmholtz Association a sustainable organisation. It is incumbent upon us to take a comprehensive approach to our research, values, structures and processes, adapt them to new situations and findings and improve them on an ongoing basis. The Helmholtz centres are already committed to shaping sustainability in the community through resource-saving, future-focused measures. In order to implement sustainability directly, we follow principles like those set out in the report *Sustainability Management for Non-University Research Organisations (LeNa)*, jointly devised by the Fraunhofer Society, the Helmholtz Association and the Leibniz Association.

Sustainable development in research, administration and operations

The LeNa report sets out key areas for the sustainable development of research centres: *Organisational Management, Research, Human Resources, Buildings and Infrastructure*, and *Support Processes*. Based on these, we have put together the following guidelines for sustainable development:

1. Implementing organisational leadership in an integrated way

To embed transparent sustainability management, we need to comply with the basic principles of sound and responsible organisational management and promote an inclusive workplace culture, for example by engaging in participatory organisational development and fostering an enabling environment.

2. Reflecting on research topics and processes and bringing the findings to bear in a socially responsible manner

We observe the principles of good scientific practice and seek to promote skills that engender a comprehensive and socially responsible approach to research processes. For any research that aspires towards sustainability, scientists need to review the evaluation of results and impacts in the context of social responsibility. Exchanging knowledge with civil society, politics and business is an important element here.

3. Offering appealing working environments and introducing sustainable HR management

We offer attractive job opportunities within a dynamic environment. It is crucial for us to attract qualified employees at all levels and deploy them according to their skills. This requires professional HR management. Our activities include supporting staff in their career development, dealing responsibly with temporary employment contracts, ensuring equal opportunities and the appreciation of diversity, creating healthy working conditions and developing skills for future-forward, responsible action.

4. Constructing and operating research infrastructure in a resource-efficient manner

We attach immense importance to the principles of sustainable development when planning, constructing and running our operations. After all, the Helmholtz Association is noted for its outstanding research facilities and infrastructure. We aim to provide needs-based, attractive, future-oriented jobs in research, administration and operations. This calls for a comprehensive, sustainable approach that addresses technical and functional requirements, user satisfaction, energy and resource efficiency, cost-effectiveness and high-quality design.

5. Shaping support processes responsibly

We want all processes that support research and centre operations to be resource-efficient and responsible and to integrate the different aspects of sustainability including in the areas of procurement, staff mobility needs and the organisation of research conferences.

These five areas of activity are an integral part of our commitment. Together with our centres, we seek to take action within them involving all employees in the process so that they help them take shape in a cohesive way and working together to address any conflicting goals that may arise in relation to our cutting-edge research. As a publicly funded research organisation, we want to be a role model for the sustainable development of society and especially the research landscape.

This commitment goes hand in hand with our intention to be proactive in taking on activities in the five areas with a view to developing, implementing and reporting on measures and goals for the sustainable development of the centres and the Helmholtz Association as a whole.