



Subject: Sustainable travel policy

Amsterdam, 25th of April 2019

Dear Executive Board,

On behalf of the Student Council of the Faculty of Law (FSR-FdR), the Student Council of the Faculty of Humanities (FSR-FGw), the Student Council of the Faculty of Science (FSR-FNWI), the Student Council of Amsterdam University College (FSR-AUC) and the Green Office, we, the Student Council of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences (FSR-FMG) and the Central Student Council (CSR), have taken the initiative to compose a letter concerning the absence of sustainable travel policy at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). We advise to, as soon as possible, introduce a sustainable travel policy at the UvA.

Researchers and teachers at the UvA travel a lot in favor of science, sometimes obliged. They travel not seldom a couple of times a year to foreign countries to visit congresses, to do research and to attend seminars.¹ We really treasure the important work researchers and teachers do in favor of the university and in favor of society as a whole, but we think this will also be possible by managing a sustainable travel policy.

PhD student Laura Burgers states: "It is necessary to take action against climate change for all actors in society. Research shows that the last chance to prevent the globe to warm over 2 degrees has to be taken within the next 10 years, and that the longer we wait, the more difficult it will become to tackle dangerous climate change. We are the last generation of human beings who can fix the problem. Effects on the climate are already noticeable - think of wildfires in Sweden and California or the failed harvests of Dutch farmers last summer."

Sustainability is a topic with a central position in at least 12 research programs at the UvA.² Either, sustainability is an important theme in education programs, for example Future Planet Studies, Environmental Law and Sustainable Management.³ We appreciate research and education on sustainable topics is already done actively, but we would like to see the UvA encouraging more sustainable policies.

Last year, 6,3 million euros were spent by the UvA on travel and accommodation costs in favor of teachers and researchers¹. However, details about transport costs and means of transport travelers use are, unfortunately, not being tracked by the UvA. The University of Edinburgh (14.608 staff members in comparison with 9.000 staff members at the UvA) does keep track of these numbers. The number of journeys by airplane in the academic year 2017/2018 at the University of Edinburgh cover 6.821 long-haul flights, 13.352 short-haul flights and 6.943 domestic flights. These flights in total have emitted 17.000.000 kilograms CO₂.⁴ Although the UvA employs a minor number of staff, both universities spend millions of euros on the declaration of travel costs. This addresses the necessity of a sustainable travel policy.

¹ <https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/waarom-moeten-wetenschappers-altijd-vliegen-naar-een-congres~a4605244/>

² <http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/uva-profiel/identiteit/duurzaamheid/onderzoek-naar-duurzaamheid/onderzoek-naar-duurzaamheid.html>

³ <http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/uva-profiel/identiteit/duurzaamheid/duurzaamheid-in-onderwijs/duurzaamheid-in-onderwijs-en-onderzoek.html>

⁴ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/sustainability/what-we-do/travel/business-travel-outside-edinburgh>

Even though it is generally known that air travel pollutes, many UvA staff members travel by airplane. We admit that some intercontinental flights to specific countries are unavoidable because of the enormous distance, but we do think diminishing the amount of flights without harming the progressive research the UvA and its high-quality staff members are doing, is possible.

Last June, the Executive Board of the University of Ghent already introduced a sustainable travel policy.⁵ Likewise KU Leuven, Utrecht University and the University of Edinburgh already have introduced/are introducing a sustainable travel policy.⁴⁻⁶⁻⁷ Inspired by their policies, we want to advise multiple recommendations to the Executive Board of the UvA.

First of all, we would like the UvA to create more insight in the CO2 footprint generated by the UvA's air travel. Now, travel costs are combined with accommodation costs in the budget, we would like to see it separately.¹⁰ To create more insight in different types of flights, the UvA could eventually implement more detailed and efficient policy based on their specific emissions.⁸

Secondly, we would like the UvA to *oblige* a so called 'green list' to staff members. This is a detailed list with cities that could be reached within six hours by bus or by train from Amsterdam (normally a flight of 2 hours + check in time + transfer time also takes about 6 hours in total). When researchers or teachers will travel to one of those cities, only tickets by bus or train should be compensated by the UvA.

Idem, we would like the UvA to *recommend* a so called 'orange list' to staff members. This is a list with cities that could be reached within 8 hours by bus or by train from Amsterdam. When researchers or teachers will travel to those cities, we want the UvA strongly recommend them to take a sustainable means of transport. Multiple websites make it easy to see which travel options are more sustainable, for example: www.greentickets.app.

Also, we advise technology as a replacing means to attend intercontinental meetings or conventions. If possible, Skype or FaceTime could be a fine working alternative to discuss or present issues with other scientists in different countries. We advise the UvA to promote and stimulate digital forms of communications over constant travels more to researchers and teachers.

Furthermore, we would like to see a reduction in business-class travels. A business-class seat takes more space, so when you are flying an economy class seat you relatively emit less CO2 than a business class seat. Besides, when researchers or teachers do travel intercontinentally, we want to recommend them to take direct flights (only when this is financially possible). This will save CO2 emissions due to the absence of interim rises and landings.⁹

Lastly, we advise CvB to think about introducing a by UvA paid financial CO2 compensation for every business trip made by airplane¹⁰. A certain amount of money could be paid for every *x kilograms CO2* emitted. This amount could thereafter be invested in internal sustainable projects at

⁵ <https://www.ugent.be/nl/univgent/waarvoor-staat-ugent/duurzaamheidsbeleid/reisbeleid>

⁶ <https://nieuws.kuleuven.be/nl/2018/ku-leuven-lanceert-vrijwillige-compensatie-voor-vliegreizen?fbclid=IwAR0LOb1GgTyNzmFTquLBqqQ6ygFoLFLbU2GLCefeEJiiCM92fsJ6YX8Jdm0#nieuwsmail>

⁷ <https://www.uu.nl/organisatie/duurzame-uu/bedrijfsvoering/opdefiets>

⁸ <https://met.climateneutralgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/vliegen-climate-neutral-groep-white-paper.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.milieucentraal.nl/duurzaam-vervoer/vliegen-of-ander-vakantievervoer/>

¹⁰ co2.myclimate.org



the university, for example the purchase of electrical bikes¹¹ for teachers/researchers who live at a relatively small distance and drive by car, or the purchase of more solar panels at university buildings.

We believe the University of Amsterdam, as a high-impact organization in society, could make another step in becoming more sustainable by implementing a sustainable travel policy on the basis of above recommendations.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

The Student Council of the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences (FSR-FMG)

The Central Student Council (CSR)

Supporting parties:

The Student Council of the Faculty of Law (FSR-FdR)

The Student Council of the Faculty of Humanities (FSR-FGw)

The Student Council of the Faculty of Science (FSR-FNWI)

The Student Council of Amsterdam University College (FSR-AUC)

The Green Office

¹¹ <https://nieuws.kuleuven.be/nl/2018/eerste-elektrische-ku-leuven-fietsen-in-gebruik-genomen>

12. Appendix

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1		Begroting 2018 t/m periode 16	Begroting 2018 t/m periode 16	Begroting 2018 t/m periode 16		
2	Grootboekrekening	UVAD180	44740	44750		
3	Bedrijf/Faculteit/Dienst	Reis- en verblijfkosten	Reis- en verblijfkosten (binnenland)	Reis- en verblijfkosten (buitenland)		
4	UvA enkelvoudig	-8.874	-3.721	-5.153		
5	<i>Faculteiten en inst</i>	-8.196	-3.465	-4.731		
6	FGW	-1.336	-1.336			
7	FdR	-489	-129	-359		
8	FNWI	-4.275	-1.276	-2.999		
9	FMG	-2.073	-700	-1.373		
10	AUC	-24	-24			
11	<i>Bestuur en gemeenschappelijke diensten</i>	-678	-256	-422		
12	Bestuur en bestuursstaf	-425	-160	-265		
13	BKT	-15		-15		
14	AC	-17	-17			
15	UB	-112	-12	-100		
16	StS	-58	-38	-20		
17	bC	-9	-9			
18	HO	-8	-4	-4		
19	BAU	-34	-16	-18		
20						
21						
22	<i>Bron: UvA data</i>					