Dear College van Bestuur, Dear Geert, Karen & Jan,

The Central Student Council (the Council) was requested to provide our advice on the White Paper on Sustainability. The Council is glad to see that the topic of sustainability is taken seriously and highly valued at our university. Nevertheless, the Council advises negatively on the White Paper on Sustainability.

As a general advice regarding the White Paper, we believe that there should be a more quantitative approach to the different topics and goals mentioned. In several points throughout the Paper, we notice goals based on percentages. However, we would like to request a clear baseline for many of these abstract goals by the first quarter of 2021. This way, we can have a more realistic approach where we can clearly formulate reasonable expectations.

Additionally, the Council would like to suggest an annual review of the current White Paper on Sustainability. We believe that a topic such as sustainability is an ever-changing topic. There are constantly new scientific discoveries and technological development aiming at creating a more sustainable society. While it is great to have long-term goals and aims within this topic, we do not see a reason why this Paper should not be reviewed, discussed, and if necessary, updated, annually.

In the Paper, there are several projects in which we lack detailed information on the different sustainable options. We believe that the Paper should put some responsibility and focus on the diverse project directors at our university. We believe that each project director has the required knowledge and proficiency on their specific topic. Therefore, we would like to have some type of independent overview of the decisions they have taken within said project. This will help others, such as the Central Student Council, understand why they opted for one sustainable option over the other.

The Central Student Council believes that the White Paper lacks in regard to the financial aspect. We understand that sustainability comes at a high cost. That being said, we do see an extensive plan in the White Paper on how we are going to pay for many of the goals that we have set.
Towards a fair ecological footprint: 25% reduction in five years:

The White Paper on Sustainability mentions the desire to ban the use of all water bottles. The Council wants to point out that this has been an ongoing goal with the previous Central Student Councils. Therefore, we want to highlight the importance of achieving this goal within the assigned deadline. The Council would like to see this goal achieved by the time the canteens at our universities open up again. We think that it is currently the best time to pursue such a goal as all of the canteens are currently closed, and therefore this will not cause any extra workload.

In regard to the establishment of a wind turbine at the Science Park campus. The Council perceives this initiative as an unrealistic goal. We do not believe that within the Amsterdam ‘ring’ is the correct place for a wind turbine, especially not at one of our university campuses. When discussing wind turbines, many questions arise from our side: Is the Amsterdam municipality in favour of this? Has there been an adequate amount of research done with regard to the noise pollution and the probable nuisance for the students and staff at the Science Park campus and neighbouring student housing? Is a wind turbine the most sustainable, reliable and cost-effective option that we should prioritise over other types of renewable energy?

We do agree on reducing the use of printers and papers on our university campus. However, we wonder how this objective will specifically be reached. What are the solutions proposed to incentivise students and professors to turn to digital educational resources rather than printing? Are there any concrete initiatives on how to reduce this?

We are happy to read that one of the measures will be to reuse or repair instead of throwing away perfectly usable furniture. However, the White Paper does not mention anywhere how to responsibly dispose of these. Therefore, we propose to create a plan to either donate or sell at a low price the furniture that is still in good condition to either individual students or study associations. This can range from a simple table to a whiteboard that could be used to create a decent and fully functional study space within a student accommodation for instance.

Waste and procurement:

Additionally, we do not believe that a decrease of trash stations would incentivise students and staff members to reduce their consumption of disposables or waste in general. The Council understands that having bins in every room is unrealistic as it creates a heavy workload for the cleaning staff and might even be more unsustainable. However, a solution would be to ensure that there are several bin stations with recycling options on each floor of our university buildings. We believe that turning every bin station into one where you would have to separate the waste will help students and staff change their habits. Additionally, the Council would like to see clear instructions on the bin stations which waste belongs to which separatory bin. As for now, coffee cups are evenly spread over paper and general waste because of unclear instructions, which can easily be fixed.

Dashboard:

The White Paper suggests the development of a dashboard on the website, tracking the progress of the White Paper’s objective. The Council asks the CvB to make this dashboard available for all students and staff members. Furthermore, it would like to see the dashboard explain what the objectives are and what the plans are to meet these. Lastly, the Council hopes the dashboard will be updated regularly and that a tool will be created to receive input from students and staff members on sustainability, as the dashboard will become a central place for sustainability at the UvA.

Fossil-free campuses:

Regarding turning our campuses fossil-free, we would like to receive an explanation and the reasoning behind the current timeline. We understand that prioritising the “new and modern” buildings, such as Roeterseiland and the Science Park campus, is easier and a more achievable
goal in the short-term. However, the Council does not understand why the “old” buildings, such as the City Centre campuses, should be on stand-by as a long-term goal. Should we not prioritise the buildings with the highest CO\textsubscript{2} emission? Would it not be more harmful to leave the “old” buildings on stand-by rather than the “new” buildings? Therefore, the Council would like to see the timeline of the City Centre campuses to be sped up.

*Food and beverage:*

While our current caterer will be making efforts starting from 2021 to be more in line with our current goals for sustainability, we believe that those would be better reached by another company. This conclusion stems from the experiences the previous Council and the current Council, have had with working with the current caterer. Otherwise, there has been a general discontent with the current caterer from different parties at the university. We perceive the current caterer is one that only focuses on their commercial gain rather than prioritising sustainability. We believe there needs to be way more transparency regarding the contract with the current caterer. This will explain to us and others why we have decided to negotiate with an unsustainable caterer rather than finding a new caterer that prioritises sustainability.

Moreover, over the years, coffee cups have become a symbol of superfluous trash. Therefore, it is time for us to get up to date with the political agenda and turn this one component into the priority for our fight against disposables. This can be done by creating a campaign on this topic and attempting to change consumer behaviour. However, this does not exclude the university from looking at alternatives for other types of disposables (e.g. paper plate, cutlery).

The Central Student Council believes that the White Paper on Sustainability has some ambitious goals, maybe even too ambitious. However, it provides goals with no clear explanation on how to reach it. We believe that the Paper should focus less on what goals to achieve and rather more on how we should achieve these goals. We want to point out that the Council is happy to engage in future discussion and working groups regarding sustainability.

We look forward to your response.

Met vriendelijke groet,

Nina Hol
Voorzitter CSR 20|21