



# Sustainability Strategy

Prague University of Economics and Business

PRAGUE, DECEMBER 2024

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# A word from the Rector

Dear colleagues, students and partners,

With great pleasure I present the Sustainability Strategy of the Prague University of Economics and Business, which is being developed in response to the current environmental, social and economic challenges. This strategy is closely linked to our involvement in the significant project Sustainable Education and Environmental Development, which aims to promote sustainable development and contribute to the Czech Republic's transition to an environmentally friendly and responsible economy. Our university has a key role in this process, and I am proud that we can play an active role in creating change that will have a lasting impact.

The Sustainability Strategy is not only a response to global challenges such as climate change and the protection of natural resources but also reflects our responsibility as an educational institution. We aim to minimise our ecological footprint and educate future generations of economists, managers and leaders who can seek innovative and sustainable solutions in their various professional fields.

This document outlines a clear vision and concrete steps for achieving sustainability across our activities. From implementing sustainability principles in teaching and research to innovating in our university operations to strengthening collaboration with the public and private sectors, these areas are integral to our commitment to sustainability. We want to be an institution that leads by example and inspires others in the Czech Republic and internationally.

But the Sustainability Strategy is just the beginning. Implementing the set goals requires the engagement of the entire academic community - teachers, students, researchers and administrative staff. Your active participation, ideas, and initiatives are essential if we work together to create a more sustainable and responsible university.

Let me thank all those involved in preparing this strategy and those who will play a key role in its implementation. We can contribute to positive change that will impact our university and society as a whole.



Prague, 16 December 2024

doc. Ing. Petr Dvořák, Ph.D.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Petr Dvořák', written over a light blue horizontal line.

# 1 Introduction

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The Sustainability Strategy of the Prague University of Economics and Business (VŠE) for 2025-2030 results from the cooperation of many actors aware of the crucial importance of sustainable development and its systematic integration into all aspects of the University's operations. The approach of VŠE is based on the conviction that sustainability should not be perceived as a merely associated activity but as a fundamental element that will become the long-term core of all activities of our university, regardless of specific projects. Sustainable development presents a slew of challenges, but it also opens many opportunities.

Sustainability has become a megatrend, particularly in the last decade, significantly impacting the global economy. The European Union is a world leader in environmental policies and is actively shaping the economic and regulatory environment through instruments such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), the Green Deal for Europe initiative or the "Fit for 55" package.

Knowledge and understanding of sustainability principles are key competencies in preparing future economists, managers, and entrepreneurs for their careers. VŠE graduates who can integrate these principles into the decision-making processes of organisations will be better prepared for the demands of the changing labour market and will gain a significant competitive advantage.

The Sustainability Strategy emphasises the University's active involvement in addressing environmental and social challenges. This approach will improve the overall impact of VŠE in these areas and enhance its prestige nationally and internationally. Last but not least, an active approach to sustainability will help to meet the standards of prestigious international accreditations and improve the position of VŠE in global university rankings where it is already listed.

Based on dialogue with relevant stakeholders, VŠE is aware of its potential to contribute to sustainability in many areas and through various mechanisms.

Key pillars of the Strategy include operations, education, research and the broader university community. Embedding sustainable development principles permanently in all these areas is impossible without their full adoption into the ethos of the University. This process will be supported by an adequate organisational structure, as well as amping up its capacity in line with this Strategy.

The Prague University of Economics and Business can contribute to sustainability through direct and indirect influences. Direct influence consists of applying sustainable principles in the operation and implementation of all activities of the University, for example, by increasing energy efficiency, responsible management of resources and waste, and further minimising the ecological (carbon) footprint. Indirect influence stems from guiding academic

community members through education, focusing research on sustainability issues, creating an inspiring environment and leading by example. This approach has been confirmed through dialogue with stakeholders, which revealed that they consider it essential that VŠE acts according to its stated values.

The Strategy is based on the widely accepted UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represent a globally recognised framework for developing a more sustainable society, therefore reference to the SDGs is an integral part of the Strategy.

**Note:** In the interests of clarity, this document uses a generic masculine to refer to the entities concerned. However, all generic masculines in the following text should be understood to include their feminine forms (employee, supervisor, worker, assistant, professor, etc.).



Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals

## 1.1 About VŠE

The Prague University of Economics and Business (VŠE), founded in 1953, is the largest public university of economics in the Czech Republic. VŠE is divided into six faculties offering Bachelor's, Master's, PhD and MBA study programmes. Five faculties - the Faculty of Finance and Accounting, the Faculty of International Relations, the Faculty of Business Administration, the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics, and the Faculty of Economics - are located in the centre of Prague. The Faculty of Management operates in Jindřichův Hradec. Studies are conducted according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) principles.

More than 13,000 students are currently enrolled at VŠE. The University offers Bachelor's degree programmes in Czech, English and Russian, and Master's and Doctoral programmes in Czech and English. In March 2024, the VŠE was the first higher education institution in the Czech Republic to be accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). It is included in the Financial Times ranking and has long been rated as one of the best business schools in Central and Eastern Europe by the Eduniversal Ranking project. Teaching is provided by approximately 600 qualified academic staff and many external practitioners. The University's specialised library contains over 430,000 books and 330 periodical titles.

Students can use hundreds of computers, wireless internet connection and the advanced student information system InSIS on the VŠE campuses. Nearly 4,000 beds are available for students from outside Prague. The school has its own sports facilities. Students can use a modern multi-purpose sports hall opened in 2009. The 1,400 m<sup>2</sup> gymnasium can accommodate three volleyball or basketball courts, handball, floorball, indoor football and other sports. In addition, it houses an artificial climbing wall and a rehabilitation facility. There is a football field with synthetic turf in the dormitory compound.

## 1.2 Context, purpose of the strategy and funding

The VŠE Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 has been drafted at a time when the world faces several global challenges, such as climate change, growing social and economic inequality, increasing aggression and wars, loss of biodiversity, etc. New technologies are emerging, which, on the one hand, represent an opportunity to combat these challenges, but on the other hand, they also carry significant risks of potential misuse.

These problems have far-reaching consequences for the economy, society and the environment and require the collaboration of experts from many fields.

In this context, VŠE recognises its responsibility and accepts its commitment to contribute to the sustainable development of society through all aspects of its activities, including education, research, operations and administration.

The VŠE Sustainability Strategy 2025-2030 was created to respond to global sustainability challenges and actively contribute to their solution. Our strategy is based on the internationally recognised Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It aims to create an inspiring and innovative environment that supports our students' and staff's personal and professional development. At the same time, we strive to minimise the negative environmental impacts of VŠE operations and actively seek areas where we can contribute positive change. Specifically, the purpose of this Strategy is to initiate and deepen the following processes:

- Integrate sustainability into all areas of the University's activities.
- Reduce the environmental impacts associated with the operation of VŠE.
- Promote health, well-being and equal opportunities for all academic community members.

- Contribute to solving societal problems through education, research, and collaboration with external partners.
- Strengthen success in AACSB reaccreditations and improve performance in the Financial Times Ranking.
- Be ranked among sustainability leaders in the Central European region in the category of economics universities.

The development of this Strategy was supported by external funding from Component 7.4 of the National Renewal Plan for Higher Education 2023-2025. In addition to developing the Strategy, the funding aided devising newly accredited programmes, new courses in existing degree programmes, and lifelong learning courses in sustainability. Additional funding for the implementation of the objectives and measures of the Strategy will be secured through a combination of external resources, e.g. from the Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports with EU support, as well as utilising internal resources of the VŠE in line with the University’s primary mission and with regard to resource and capacity constraints. The implementation of the Strategy will include the preparation of action plans based on cost-benefit analyses (CBA) and regular evaluation of the fulfilment of individual objectives. The Strategy will become an integral part of the VŠE’s new strategic plan, while its long-term continuity will be ensured by a follow-up strategy beyond 2030.

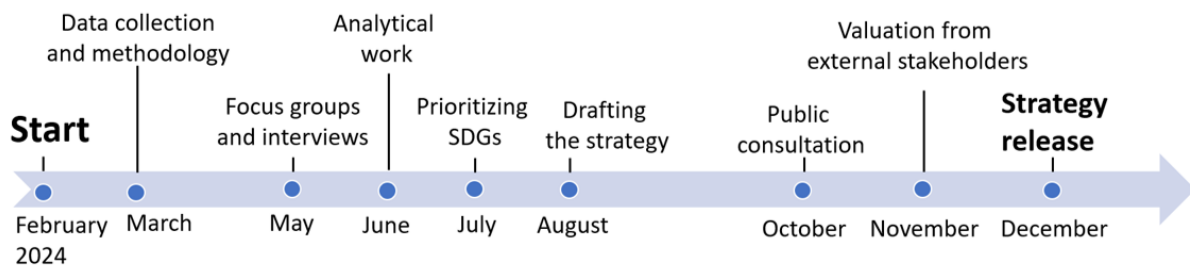


Fig. 2: Timeline for strategy development

## 1.3 Methodology and analysis

The VŠE Sustainability Strategy was developed as a participatory process. It involved a wide range of internal and external stakeholders: students, lecturers, University management, technical and economic staff, and University partners from the commercial and public sectors.

Methodologically, the development of the Strategy was based on the methodology for preparing public strategies of the Ministry for Regional Development. It was also based primarily on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Strategic Sustainability Management Benchmark for AACSB-accredited European universities, and the AACSB accreditation standard. Its development was also inspired by AASHE's STARS (The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) and Impact Rankings. To develop this Strategy, input from multiple sources was used, in particular the following:

- Unilead (2022) and Unilead 2 (2023) projects:
  - mapping the current level of sustainability at the VŠE, especially in VŠE's operational areas, through data collection and analyses;
  - identification of relevant one-off and regular activities promoting sustainable development and knowledge on this issue;
  - creating and connecting a network of actors working on sustainable development;
  - development of detailed generic recommendations for each area.
- A questionnaire survey on food, waste and sustainable mobility (November 2023 - February 2024). The questionnaire survey results showed the interest of VŠE students and staff in information on sustainable development, in particular water management, waste management, sustainable food, circular economy and energy. The need for better communication about sustainable development initiatives and student involvement was mentioned.
- Focus groups with key stakeholders. A total of 8 meetings were held, including two meetings with students, three meetings with staff (academic and non-academic), two meetings with VŠE partners and one with VŠE management. The results of the broad stakeholder dialogue are presented later in this document.
- Discussions with catering providers at VŠE.
- Continuous monitoring of VŠE operations.
- Sustainability strategies and sustainability reports of European AACSB-accredited universities.
- International accreditation and rating systems for evaluating universities.

The outputs of the aforementioned activities were quantitatively and qualitatively analysed, evaluated and communicated with relevant stakeholders. The key findings have been used to formulate this Sustainability Strategy in the relevant areas.

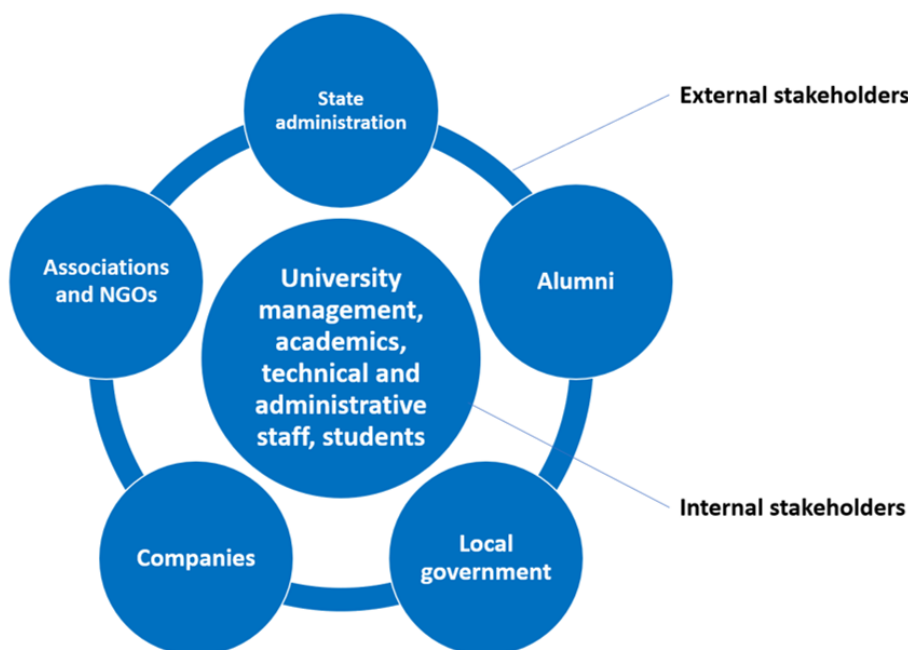


Figure 3: Groups of stakeholders involved in the preparation of the Strategy



As most universities structure their activities in sustainable development according to the SDGs, this issue was also given special attention in the stakeholder dialogue and focus groups.

At the beginning, focus groups participants were asked to rank the SDGs regarding their relevance for VŠE. They were asked to list at least five goals, with the most relevant goal numbered 1, followed by less relevant goals. These individual rankings were used as a basis for discussion during the focus groups meetings. The results showed a variety of answers before the debate and an uneasy path to consensus during the conversation.

For each objective, a total score was calculated as the ratio of the number of responses in a given focus group in which the objective occurred to the average ranking of that objective in that group. The Appendix includes the summary results for all groups along with the total score, number of occurrences, average ranking, and number of occurrences among the top five objectives for each goal.

It can be summarised that all the relevant aspects bring a pattern, with the two most important goals being SDG 4 -- Quality education, and SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth. These are followed by a group of goals of medium importance and goals with the lowest frequency of occurrence and low scores. This hierarchy of goals is visually presented in Figure 4.

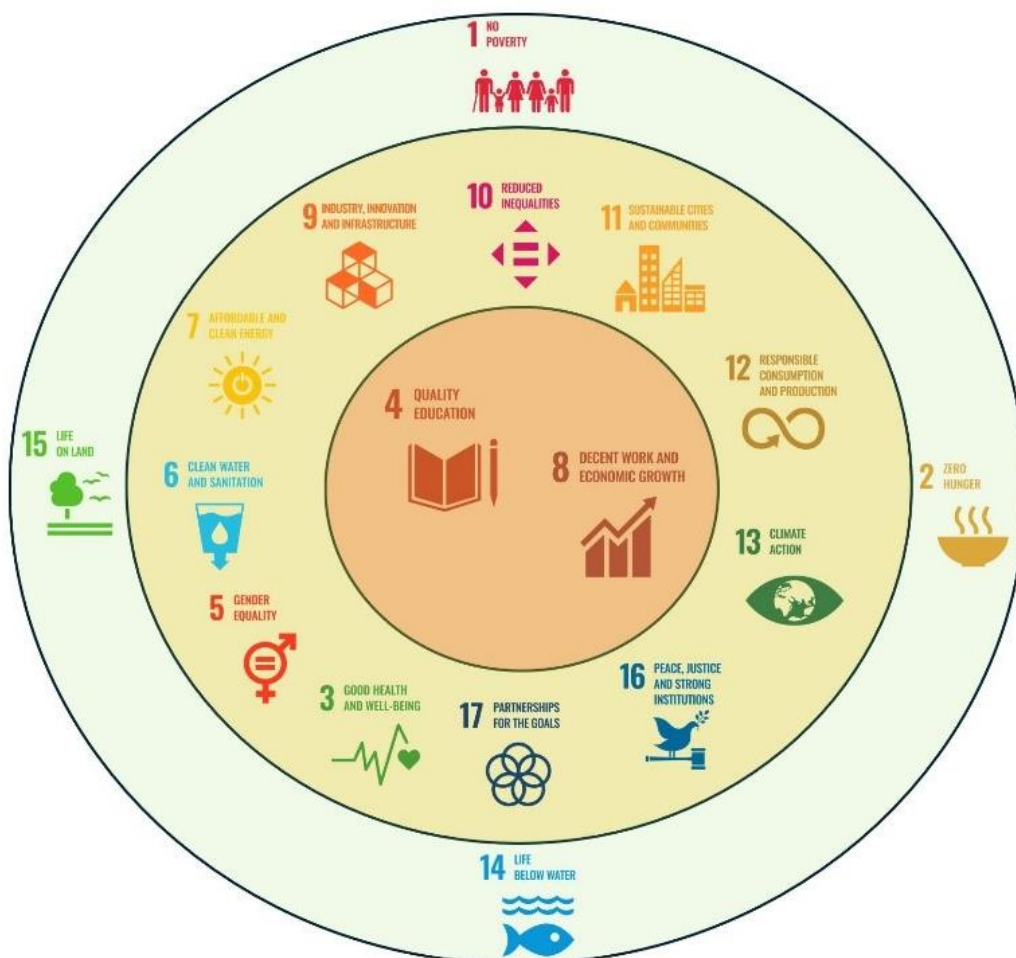


Figure 4: Hierarchy of goals

Also interesting were the results of the stakeholder dialogue that followed after ranking objectives at the beginning of the focus groups. The discussion showed that, initially, some participants had no clear idea of the content and cross-links between the SDGs. However, during the dialogue, many realised their importance and connections.

Some of the objectives proved controversial in the debate. This includes, in particular, Goal 5 -Gender equality, where some stakeholders ranked it very high in their answers at the beginning. During the discussion, however, there were minority but vocal objections to the goal, which led to its proponents gradually abandoning it. The theoretical justification for this phenomenon in terms of psycho-social theories may be that group dynamics and a tendency towards conformity were at work. Some stakeholders also reported that they considered Goal 5 part of Goal 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions. Goal 5 is not explicitly addressed in this Strategy as it is expected to be discussed in a separate strategy document (Equal Opportunities Plan).

**Note:** Given the group dynamics and the hypothesis using conformity theory, it would be appropriate to reinforce the topic of gender equality in the Strategy, as its actual importance among stakeholders is probably higher than the quantitative data suggests.

It also turned out that the stakeholders considered it essential that VŠE not only teach about sustainable development but also set an example because only in this way can a generation of future managers be educated to apply the principles of sustainable development in their organisations. This fact significantly impacts the decision to implement some of the measures because, on the one hand, it is true that assessing the costs and benefits of the measures is always necessary, but on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the benefits (unfortunately not easily quantifiable) often include the educational impact of the measure on stakeholders, especially students.

## 1.4 Vision, strategic areas and strategic objectives

We formulate our vision of sustainability for VŠE as follows:

**The theme of sustainability will be integrated into teaching, research, operations, administration and community engagement at VŠE. The University will become one of the leaders in sustainability in the segment of universities of economics in the Central European region.**

Considering the results of stakeholder dialogue and the declared vision, this document is structured into five core strategic areas: education and research, operations, health and well-being, governance and management, and the university community.



*Figure 5: Identified main strategic areas*

The main strategic goal of VŠE is to contribute to sustainability in all of these strategic areas so that VŠE can become one of the leaders in the segment of economics universities in the Central European region. Meeting this goal will increase prestige and fulfil VŠE's overarching goals, including maintaining or improving international accreditations and rankings such as AACSB, EQUIS, and Financial Times Ranking.



## 2 Education and research

Teaching and science represent the core activities of VŠE with a significant impact on society. The theme of sustainability has long been embedded in these areas and is reflected in the VŠE Mission Statement. Due to the emphasis of international accreditation bodies on sustainability, this theme is also reflected in the quality monitoring and improvement processes: one of the learning objectives of all VŠE study programmes according to the AACSB methodology is the Ethics and Sustainability objective, whereas the EQUIS accreditation emphasises the inclusion of *Ethics, sustainability, and responsibility* in the content of educational and scientific activities.

Several specialised research centres at the University focus on sustainability. Nevertheless, some fragmentation can be observed in this activity, which a unified strategy can overcome. This must be based on the systematic development of sustainability in education and research and on VŠE's leading position and credibility in this field, which must be recognised by students and graduates as well as by companies and policymakers.

Education and research issues relate to SDG 4 - Quality education, SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth, SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production, and SDG 17 - Partnerships for the goals.

# 2.1 Education

## 2.1.1 Sustainability knowledge and skills

**We equip students in our accredited study programmes, i.e., future leaders of Czech business and public administration, with up-to-date knowledge, skills and competencies for leading, implementing and communicating green and digital transformation and their social context, emphasising economic and long-term implications.**

We perceive the effective integration of sustainability into teaching and pedagogy in several dimensions:

- Learning about sustainability means that the subjects taught cover topics linked to the principles of sustainable development, with particular attention to the area of green and digital transformation at the knowledge level.
- Learning about sustainability is then seen as teaching that enables the acquisition of sustainability-related skills and challenges students to implement practical activities that positively impact sustainability (at VŠE, in a company, or in students' lives).
- Developing a sustainability mindset is another leverage point that takes note of personal and collective thought patterns and attitudes.

In the combination of the above-mentioned approaches, we see an opportunity to create specialised programmes and courses on sustainability, integrate the topic into existing study programmes, and impact the entire student population of VŠE through extracurricular activities and connect students with lecturers from the ranks of relevant experts.

In our approach to the sustainable mindset, we are inspired by the concepts of the *Inner Development Goals and the Sustainability Mindset Principles* by Isabel Rimanoczy. To develop practice-oriented learning, we will draw on the methodology of the so-called Living Labs, which are well-proven in higher education. *Living Labs are real-life test and experimentation environments that foster co-creation and open innovation among the main actors of the Quadruple Helix Model, namely: citizens, government, industry.* As such, we will also support the development of professionally oriented study programmes in this area, in line with the strategic intent of VŠE.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Offer specialised study programmes and courses focused on sustainability</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer specialised study programmes directly focused on sustainability and set quantitative and qualitative indicators for up to 2030.</li> <li>• Offer specialised courses and specialisations directly focused on sustainability and set quantitative and qualitative indicators for them by 2030.</li> <li>• Create an analytical tool to identify courses that fully or partially address sustainability and map the sustainable</li> </ul>

	<p>mindset to support their development and the number of students taking them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities for student engagement in addressing real sustainability challenges at the organisation's level (university, business, NGO), household, community, municipality, region, and state.</li> <li>• Develop collaboration with practice - offer regular lectures and workshops with sustainability practitioners to the university community (including alumni) during regular teaching and established innovation weeks.</li> <li>• Create an electronic set of 25 case studies reflecting corporate, public and non-profit sustainability practices.</li> </ul>
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<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>	<b>Build a sustainability mindset among all members of the academic community of VŠE</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the development of a sustainable mindset in all students and staff of VŠE through the creation of 30 optional modules in the LMS.</li> <li>• Foster a sustainable mindset among a pilot group of 30 teachers and 30 students through workshops.</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 3</b>	<b>Integrate sustainability into the measurement of learning outcomes (AOL)</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an appropriate survey instrument that measures student progress in sustainability competencies to facilitate AOL measurement in Ethics and Sustainability.</li> </ul>

### 2.1.2 Credibility and leadership

VŠE is a popular institution for the topic of sustainability among both applicants to accredited study programmes and those interested in executive education. Educators at VŠE have both content and methodological support. Sustainability is part of the University's ethos; VŠE sets an example for its students.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Promote the knowledge and competencies of VŠE teachers in the field of sustainability</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate into existing internal communications informing educators about quality sustainability education offerings (internally and externally).</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot test the model of a "sustainability award" for educators for leadership and contribution to sustainability at VŠE. Verify the contribution in terms of good PR practice.</li> <li>• Set up a collaborative group of educators - internal sustainability experts - within talent management and enable sharing of experience and joint learning, e.g. with external experts.</li> <li>• Embed sustainability in the corporate culture of VŠE: create and pilot a training module mandatory for all VŠE employees.</li> <li>• Revise the existing educator standard and add sustainability criteria to reflect, e.g. a long-term, evidence-based approach, project-based learning on real cases, locally embedded, inclusive, participatory, etc.</li> <li>• Create digital methodological support and a shared e-library of resources relevant to sustainability, provide one-to-one consultation for teachers to enhance sustainability in teaching and research (mentoring/coaching).</li> </ul>
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<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>	<b>Attract those interested in executive education in the field of sustainability to VŠE</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devise new executive education (CŽV) programmes in the field of sustainability and use them to promote VŠE's sustainability-related activities.</li> <li>• Establish new strategic partnerships with companies, the public sector and non-profit organisations to develop executive education and conferences at VŠE.</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 3</b>	<b>Increase information about sustainability in VŠE's communications to the general public</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop volunteer activities within VŠE: pilot a volunteer day model meaningfully linked to teaching.</li> <li>• Suggest ways to activate the university community in sustainability-focused extracurricular activities on campus, e.g. European campaigns such as the European Week for Sustainable Development and international programmes such as EcoCampus.</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Research

Through its research, VŠE contributes to expanding knowledge on sustainability in relevant economic fields. Research, research collaborations, and publications broaden the view on various aspects of sustainability and influence and shape the field of practice.

VŠE has gained some experience in sustainability research. For example, the Faculty of Finance and Accounting conducts research on green finance and non-financial reporting, and the Faculty of International Relations researches ESG Reporting and the EU regulatory framework, innovation policy, food waste and financial taxonomy. The Faculty of Business Administration explores ESG in management, ESG rating issues and social entrepreneurship. Through data analytics and big data, the topic of ESG has research potential for the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics. The Faculty of Economics focuses on relevant issues mainly within the Centre for Economics, Energy and Public Policy.

VŠE aims to expand the quality and quantity of scientific activities in the sustainability field and strengthen cooperation between research teams and individuals. Research teams and initiatives have so far remained largely isolated. However, significant inter-faculty collaboration in this field has already been implemented in the preparation of the project "ESG: Enterprise Sustainability" within the framework of the OP JAK call for inter-sectoral cooperation.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Link research to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop an analysis of sustainability themes within academics' research outputs according to AASHE STARS keywords.</b></li> <li>• <b>Prepare an analysis of sustainability issues in the framework of projects implemented at the University.</b></li> <li>• <b>Measure the impact of VŠE research outside academic journals, e.g. in the form of media impact.</b></li> <li>• <b>Create the position of Research impact manager at the VŠE level.</b></li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>	<b>Strengthen accountability and openness in scientific research</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enhance the functioning of the Research Ethics Committee.</b></li> <li>• <b>Establish faculty open access article processing charge (APC Fund) funds for articles published in the first decile or quartile according to AIS.</b></li> <li>• <b>Support the data management of research teams by introducing a data steward position.</b></li> </ul>



- Bolster the awareness of VŠE students and staff of access to professional resources and datasets available only through the fee-based services of major publishers.

### Strategic Objective 3

Increase the volume and quality of research, including research on sustainability

#### Measures

- Promote interdisciplinary research and collaboration between teams and individuals across VŠE, emphasising sustainability.
- Put out dissertation and thesis topics in the field of sustainability.
- Create an internal platform to connect internal departments and individuals working on sustainable development.
- Promote cross-sectoral research in collaboration with the community.
- Promote the integration of sustainable development principles into the work of researchers.
- Encourage participation in international sustainability projects.



## 3. Operation

The importance of operations within the core functions of a university is sometimes underestimated, but in terms of sustainability it is of great importance. It is relevant to the achievement of most of the Sustainable Development Goals. Not only for its direct impact on the environment and the well-being of internal and external stakeholders but also, for example, as an area in which students can actively engage and test their acquired knowledge in concrete practice. The University's operation is a vast area, which we divide into several sub-areas, namely energy and climate, biodiversity on the University property, catering, purchasing and procurement, transport and mobility, waste and water management.

### 3.1 Energy and climate

The stakeholder focus group interviews confirmed the relevance of the energy theme within the Sustainability Strategy. The VŠE management has identified SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy, as a high priority. Energy consumption and energy price volatility significantly impact the University's operating costs and indoor environment quality. The UNILEAD II project outputs show that more than half of the greenhouse gas emissions produced by Czech universities are related to their energy consumption. This places energy and climate issues

among the priority areas with the highest potential for environmental protection. Internal and external stakeholders have emphasised the importance of implementing SDG 13 - Climate action. VŠE is therefore committed to reducing its operational energy intensity and diversifying its energy mix. The University will also strive to improve the indoor environment throughout the campus. VŠE will actively involve students and staff in meeting these commitments and tasks arising from them.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Reduce energy consumption</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand consumption monitoring and prepare a subsequent analysis of the data obtained for decision-making purposes.</li> <li>• Enhance the insight and expertise of key energy sector staff, focusing on energy conservation, energy efficiency and the use of clean energy sources.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>	<b>Increase energy efficiency</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and publish a plan for improving the energy efficiency of the VŠE campuses.</li> <li>• Implement energy efficiency and effectiveness criteria in investment and purchasing decision-making processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Objective 3</b>	<b>Reach climate neutrality in terms of energy consumption by 2045</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect data for GHG protocol from 2025 for Scope 1, 2 and 3.</li> <li>• Develop and publish a roadmap for achieving a climate-neutral university (Climate Action Plan).</li> <li>• Electrify the VŠE fleet.</li> <li>• Install renewable energy sources.</li> </ul>

### 3.2 Biodiversity across VŠE land and campus

VŠE recognises the importance of biodiversity for protecting and promoting the environment and its positive impact on human health. VŠE owns major campuses in Prague’s Žižkov, Jižní Město, and Holešovice and in Jindřichův Hradec where it plans to implement proactive land management to enhance biodiversity. At the same time, it will improve its buildings' indoor environment.

Biodiversity issues relate to SDG 3 - Good health and well-being, SDG 4 - Quality education, SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation, SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production, SDG 13 - Climate action, and SDG 15 - Life on land.

<b>Strategic objective</b>	<b>Proactive land management of all VŠE campuses to enhance biodiversity, including improving the indoor environment of buildings</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop and implement an action plan for biodiversity development on VŠE land.</b></li> <li>• <b>Enhance biodiversity on existing VŠE land through, e.g. installation of insect refuges and appropriate plant seeding and maintenance.</b></li> <li>• <b>Reassess pesticide and herbicide use.</b></li> <li>• <b>Propose modification (reduction) of pesticides and herbicides and targeted use on problematic weeds.</b></li> <li>• <b>Prepare a proposal for enhancing greenery within the internal environment of the VŠE buildings and its implementation.</b></li> </ul>

### 3.3 Catering

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO UN) has defined a "sustainable diet" as "... a diet with low environmental impact that contributes to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable, nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy, while optimizing natural and human resources".

Sustainable diets improve overall population health, reduce healthcare costs, and increase productivity. The socio-economic dimension includes equitable access to food for all segments of society and promotes economic growth by stimulating productivity and reducing the likelihood of disease. The environmental dimension contains aspects of sustainable food production and consumption.

At VŠE, external operators provide catering services, and the implementation of the proposed measures will, therefore, depend significantly on the booming influence of these suppliers in the relevant areas.

The issue of nutrition relates in particular to SDG 1 - No poverty, SDG 2 - Zero hunger, SDG 3 – Good health and well-being, SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities, SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production, SDG 13 - Climate action, SDG 14 - Life below water, SDG 15 - Life on land, and SDG 17 - Partnerships for the goals.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Implement the transformation towards sustainable food</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold regular negotiations with catering suppliers (including event catering) on the possibilities of transitioning to sustainable catering (local ingredients, purchasing from suppliers advocating ethical farming and growing, purchasing quality ingredients with recognised certifications, including Fairtrade, waste-free food preparation).</li> <li>• Establish cooperation with sustainable caterers. This cooperation will be used not only to influence members of the academic community (diners) through education in the area of healthy and sustainable eating but also to influence caterers at VŠE to increase their ability to adhere to the principles of sustainable eating in line with the current knowledge while maintaining acceptable prices.</li> <li>• Develop a standard for event catering, including a requirement for the availability of vegan food at events.</li> <li>• Hold events to promote a sustainable, nutritionally rich diet.</li> <li>• Initiate and improve monitoring of key indicators in the area of nutrition.</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>	<b>Expand the supply and increase the consumption of sustainable food</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase and expand fruit supply.</li> <li>• Introduce a choice of portions in canteens (small/large).</li> <li>• Negotiate with caterers to create conditions for expanding the buffet meals offered.</li> <li>• Collaborate with partners to educate chefs of food service providers in the technology and preparation of vegetarian and vegan food.</li> <li>• Include at least one vegetarian, non-sweet dish on the menu daily (all catering establishments).</li> <li>• Include at least two vegan non-sweet dishes and one vegan soup in the daily menu at Pizza and Veget.</li> <li>• Educate diners about healthy and sustainable diets, especially plant-based diets.</li> <li>• Educate stakeholders on the importance of reducing ruminant meat consumption.</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 3</b>	<b>Improve student and staff awareness regarding catering</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Availability of information on the nutritional characteristics of all foods (including calorific value and allergen information).</b></li> <li>• <b>Unambiguous labelling of vegan and vegetarian dishes on the menu.</b></li> <li>• <b>Availability of the menu at least a day in advance.</b></li> <li>• <b>Availability of food offered centrally and locally.</b></li> <li>• <b>Availability of information on opening hours of canteens and restaurants well in advance.</b></li> </ul>

## 3.4 Purchasing and procurement

One of the key areas to boost the University's sustainability is purchasing and procurement. The supply chain is usually responsible for the largest share of negative environmental externalities, such as greenhouse gas emissions. By influencing the supply chain, the University can also affect the ethical side of the business conducted on the premises. By focusing on responsible procurement and purchasing, we help to implement the SDGs (specifically SDG 3 – Good health and well-being, SDG 9 - Industry, innovation and infrastructure, and SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production).

<b>Strategic objective</b>	<b>VŠE will introduce sustainable procurement and purchasing as a recognised standard and put it into practice in the form of pilot projects</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Establish and publish standards and rules for sustainable purchasing and procurement.</b></li> <li>• <b>Issue information materials for sustainable purchasing and procurement.</b></li> <li>• <b>Provide advice on sustainable purchasing and procurement.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop a multi-criteria procurement tool, including sustainability indicators, in collaboration with academics and students.</b></li> <li>• <b>Introduce life cycle costing (LCC) for significant investments.</b></li> <li>• <b>Initiate supply chain collaboration, including preparation for Scope 3 emissions reporting.</b></li> <li>• <b>Obtain Fairtrade University certification.</b></li> </ul>

## 3.5 Transport and mobility

The sustainable development paradigm underpins sustainable mobility. It is referenced in several SDGs: SDG 3 – Good health and well-being, SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 13 - Climate action.

The aim is to encourage students and staff to use sustainable modes of transport. These include walking, cycling and public transport. In addition to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the choice of sustainable modes of transport also has positive implications for public health and quality of life, as it enhances health, physical fitness and demands on public space (e.g. securing parking space). The Unilead 2 questionnaire survey at VŠE revealed that most students and staff use public transport to get to school and that the topic of sustainable mobility is essential to them. This is reflected, for example, in a desire to choose cleaner modes of transport when going on Erasmus or work trips or by refraining from car transport.

The main sustainable mobility objectives include:

- Gradual reduction of individual motor transport and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This is achieved by promoting working from home, flexible working hours, online or hybrid meetings, conferences and other events.
- Securing long-term financing for sustainable mobility.
- Increasing the number of students and staff who commute by bike by improving existing infrastructure. For example, increasing the capacity of bike racks in University buildings and roofing them.
- Setting compensation mechanisms for all air transport.
- Motivation to reduce the number of study and business trips made by air, especially where the destination is similarly accessible by other means of transport (mainly by train).
- Development and implementation of a policy and standard for sustainable mobility at VŠE (Travel policy, Travel plan).

The following targets are set for the provision of information and education (all from 2025):

- Raising awareness of sustainable mobility by building a sustainability website and disseminating information materials on school premises.

To meet these objectives, the following measures will be implemented:

- Conducting a transport and mobility audit focusing on sustainability and defining compensatory measures.
- Active cooperation and dialogue with the districts in which VŠE buildings are located.
- Introduction of Smart City elements, such as interactive web maps showing locations with bike racks, shared vehicles, electric vehicle chargers, etc.
- Conducting a dialogue with students and university staff and integrating participatory elements into the functioning of VŠE, giving both groups a voice on the issue.

## 3.6 Waste

VŠE is aware of the need to address the issue of responsible waste management, waste prevention and the possibility of effective cost reduction of waste disposal. The issue of waste is reflected in at least eight Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are SDG 1 - Zero hunger, SDG 3 - Good health and well-being, SDG 4 - Quality education; SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation; SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production, and SDG 14 - Life below water.

Sorting bins for glass, paper, plastic, metal, and glass are currently available on VŠE premises. The placement of water fountains and Lokni machines for filtered water is an effort to minimise the use of disposable PET bottles. Students also have the option of sorting waste on the dormitory premises. The University conducted an internal questionnaire survey revealing that students and staff are interested in waste management. The results clearly show the high willingness of both groups to sort waste and to obtain additional information on how this sorted waste is further processed. More initiatives are welcome, as shown in the objectives below.

The fundamental long-term goal of VŠE is to continuously reduce the production of mixed municipal waste, increase the share of separated waste, and, above all, minimise waste production through prevention.

Strategic Objective 1	Reduce waste
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track the proportion of waste generated by VŠE in relation to revenue.</li> <li>• Prepare an analysis of waste management at VŠE.</li> <li>• Develop and implement an action plan to reduce municipal waste production and increase recycling.</li> <li>• Work with students and partners on projects aimed at waste prevention and reduction.</li> <li>• Help students recycle and reuse products (especially at the end of the semester).</li> <li>• Reduce the number of vending machines to minimise the volume of disposable beverage containers produced.</li> <li>• Support the organisation of zero-waste, low-waste and packaging-free events.</li> <li>• Increase the number of bins for sorted waste and place them in new locations in the University buildings.</li> <li>• Reduce the number of mixed waste bins, particularly in offices and lecture theatres.</li> <li>• Promote digitising of administrative processes and teaching materials to reduce paper consumption.</li> </ul>



<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>	<b>Reduce food waste</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce, in collaboration with partners, efficient food takeaway from the canteen (re-boxes/eco-packages etc.).</li> <li>• Address the donation or other use of unconsumed food in cooperation with food service providers.</li> <li>• Ensure composting of food waste (pre- and post-consumption) in cooperation with partners.</li> <li>• Develop rules for zero-waste catering services and events, promote the rules and prioritise compostable disposable packaging.</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 3</b>	<b>Promote product reuse</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the circular economy across campus through regular swaps and other events.</li> <li>• Establish a permanent "reuse" site on campus.</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 4</b>	<b>Improve information on waste management</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance student and staff awareness of waste sorting by placing infographics on waste bins and introducing mandatory training on the Moodle platform.</li> <li>• Unify marking of containers for sorted waste in Czech and English.</li> <li>• Place maps with a plan of the VŠE premises with marked containers for sorted waste.</li> <li>• Prepare and launch an information campaign focusing on the amount of waste produced on the grounds of VŠE, together with information on how sorted waste is managed after disposal.</li> </ul>

## 3.7 Water

Sustainable water management, i.e. the efficient use of water resources while minimising environmental impacts, is key to meeting environmental objectives. It includes measures such as minimising stormwater runoff, reducing water consumption, and using rainwater to support ecosystems and biodiversity. The Sustainable Water Strategy supports meeting several Sustainable Development Goals, namely SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation, SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production, and SDG 13 - Climate action.

The geographical location of the buildings in Žižkov limits the possibilities of VŠE, as the dense development makes it impossible to adopt some solutions that promote sustainable water management. Nevertheless, the University has already adopted several measures, such as the installation of tap aerators and the option of dual flushing. VŠE is also considering sustainable water management in the long term. That is why some targets are set for renovating and constructing new university buildings.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Reduce drinking and non-potable water consumption</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conduct a water audit that analyses and evaluates all aspects of water management on campus. It serves as an essential source of information for future decision-making and refinement of defined goals in areas such as water consumption reduction.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop a consumption reduction plan and its implementation.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop a standard for sustainable water management. This includes clearly defining roles and responsibilities for meeting the set targets.</b></li> <li>• <b>Conduct a dialogue with students and university staff and integrate participatory elements into the functioning of the VŠE, giving both groups a voice on the issue.</b></li> <li>• <b>Increase the number of energy-saving taps, tap aerators, and dual flush systems in the event of renovation or new construction.</b></li> <li>• <b>Build rainwater catchment tanks in the Třebešín area.</b></li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 2</b>	<b>Awareness and education in the field of water management</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve student and staff awareness of sustainable water management. Emphasis will be placed on reducing drinking water consumption as students and staff take these habits beyond the University campus. Deploy infographics with data on water consumption (for example, the difference in the use of dual flush) and water scarcity faced by some countries, including the Czech Republic.</b></li> <li>• <b>Place an infographic with a telephone number for reporting water leaks on the premises of VŠE.</b></li> </ul>



## 4 Health, well-being and equal opportunities

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Well-being encompasses everyone's overall quality of life, covering physical and mental health, social and subjective well-being, the cultivation of the university environment, and economic and material stability. Well-being includes equal opportunities and diversity at the VŠE as a modern and prestigious employer.

Many aspects of promoting well-being have already been addressed at the VŠE. This is evidenced, among others, by the detailed information on activities in this area provided in the VŠE Annual Report for 2023, the existence of the VŠE Academic Centre, which operates the Academic Psychological Counselling Centre, the Centre for Physical Education and Sport and, more recently, the creation of co-working spaces. VŠE promotes physical health through compulsory courses for students, out-of-semester courses, and by running a gym in one of its buildings.

VŠE has formulated an Equal Opportunities Plan 2023-2027, which covers the areas of non-discrimination, fair working environment and equal opportunities. In addition, the overall HR strategy has been presented, including the concepts of talent management, career paths, maternity and parental leave system and codification of work flexibility.

The issues of health, well-being and equal opportunities relate in particular to SDG 1 – No poverty, SDG 4 - Quality education, SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities, SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Incorporate well-being into the values of VŠE</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve information on well-being and social safety activities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Thoroughly map the well-being situation through a questionnaire survey and subsequent regular monitoring of the academic community members' satisfaction with the well-being area.</b></li> <li>• <b>Create a centralised place where links to existing initiatives will be concentrated, and make the topic visible on the intranet so that users do not have to go through a series of steps to find it. The site will provide users with an easy way to comment on well-being activities and opportunities and to propose new activities where appropriate. See also the Governance and management chapter.</b></li> <li>• <b>Support and expand the activities of the Academic Centre and the Centre for Physical Education and Sport. Support the development of the Academic Psychological Counselling Centre to meet all University Counselling Standards by 2026.</b></li> <li>• <b>Support the development of the Centre for Students with Special Needs by expanding its physical and personnel facilities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Strengthen the position of the Code of Ethics and the Ethics Committee of VŠE.</b></li> <li>• <b>Fully integrate the whistleblower protection system into the school's processes.</b></li> <li>• <b>Continue to organise the Mental Health Day, piloted at VŠE in 2023, and adapt its format to the needs of students and staff.</b></li> </ul>

## Strategic Objective 2

Promote the physical and mental health of students and staff

### Measures

- Increase the range of courses in physical and mental well-being.
- Ensure that training in this area is provided both in the morning and afternoon and that there is no overlap. Training sessions will be announced well in advance, and details of the training's content will be published.
- The topics of mental balance, work-life balance, and mental hygiene are part of the teaching and other activities that take place on campus.
- Expand mentoring and coaching opportunities for students and staff.
- Promote acquiring knowledge and skills in mental balance, work-life balance and mental hygiene in accredited study programmes.
- Develop talent management with students and staff and focus more on their individual needs.
- Continue to promote student and staff sports and create the conditions for dual careers of top athletes among students.
- Integrate sport into the teaching of leadership skills.
- Promote prevention of negative phenomena in the workplace and social safety through LMS Moodle courses and personal workshops.
- Continue the development of internal communication at VŠE.
- Strengthen the integration of gender issues into research and teaching content.
- Fully implement the e-learning course "Academic Ethics", an output of the CRP project "Prevention of Unethical Behaviour in Academia and Support for Competence in Victim Care".
- Continue social safety net projects.
- Raise awareness of this issue through internal communication.
- Collaborate with other universities in the Czech Republic on social safety issues.

<b>Strategic Objective 3</b>	<b>Improve study and working conditions and cultivate the university environment</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultivate public space on campus by completing infrastructure and venues for meetings and discussion.</li> <li>• Retrofit co-working spaces to offer a broader range of socialisation activities (board games, etc.).</li> <li>• Improve the quality of the indoor environment, e.g. by adding greenery.</li> <li>• Use funds from operational programmes to improve the physical infrastructure of VŠE (e.g. renovation of the Vencovský Auditorium, etc.).</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 4</b>	<b>Decent, fair and transparent remuneration, evaluation and recruitment, VŠE HR Award</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt the VŠE Human Resource Management Strategy and implement changes to fulfil the HR Award system by 2026.</li> <li>• Implement the Equal Opportunities Plan 2023-2027 and undertake another equal opportunities audit in 2027.</li> <li>• Develop and implement the VŠE Career Code, allowing for different career paths and increasing the emphasis on staff training and regular evaluation and feedback.</li> <li>• Modernise the personnel management system at VŠE and strengthen the emphasis on career management and support.</li> <li>• Make adjustments to the HR system to develop data analytics and manage flexible working arrangements.</li> <li>• Implement a system of working with staff on maternity and parental leave and actively support their return to work.</li> <li>• Complete translations of basic internal regulations and standards into English to eliminate comprehension problems for foreign language staff and students.</li> </ul>

VŠE aims to summarise in a similar way the progress made in meeting the objectives of the Equal Opportunities Plan in its annual reports in future years.



## **5 Governance and management**

To fulfil the vision of sustainability of VŠE, to guarantee the expected outputs and results of the Strategy and to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, it is necessary to set appropriate organisational conditions to implement the Strategy. Sustainability is to be adequately embedded across the University, carefully planned, coordinated, financed, rooted in the organisation's culture, monitored and transparently reported (for simplicity, we divide this chapter into sections on administrative embedding, and communication and reporting). Functional governance and management will also boost the motivation of staff and students at all levels. The approach to meeting measures and indicators can be project-based, but it cannot be done without ongoing support directly in the University's operations.

### **5.1 Administrative embedding of sustainability**

VŠE initiates embedding sustainability in governance and identifies this competency within its leadership. It will also establish an appropriate structure to support the implementation of the Strategy, monitoring of the implementation process and the fulfilment of measures and indicators.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Reflect sustainability in organisational structures and ensure successful strategy implementation</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine competencies for sustainability within the VŠE management.</li> <li>• Establish a sustainability steering committee.</li> <li>• Establish a team to implement the Sustainability Strategy.</li> <li>• Establish a sustainability communication forum (or, e.g. the VŠE Transition Club modelled on HEC Paris) for internal and external stakeholders.</li> <li>• Support at least one student enterprise related to sustainability.</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Communication and reporting on sustainability

As evidenced by the sustainability management practices of AACSB-accredited universities and the requirements of international initiatives assessing sustainability in higher education, a successful sustainability strategy includes a long-term communication and reporting plan. VŠE will, therefore, establish relevant mechanisms in this area. Furthermore, sustainability reporting is synergistic with the efforts of VŠE to position itself in prestigious international rankings and will also be used in AACSB re-accreditations.

<b>Strategic Objective 1</b>	<b>Ensure monitoring and effective and transparent communication</b>
<b>Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a central website for information on sustainability.</li> <li>• Introduce a regular internal newsletter on sustainability at VŠE.</li> <li>• Introduce information about the sustainability of VŠE during the orientation week for new students.</li> <li>• Introduce information on the sustainability of VŠE as part of the adaptation process for new employees.</li> <li>• Launch a platform for information on strategy and performance in sustainability on the intranet.</li> <li>• Regularly collect data on student and employee engagement in sustainability activities.</li> <li>• Organise at least one major sustainability awareness event once a year targeting students.</li> <li>• Regular transparent sustainability reporting.</li> </ul>





## 6 University community

VŠE is aware of its influence in society and the responsibility it entails. As part of its Sustainability Strategy, it is committed on a long-term basis to supporting awareness-raising of sustainability in the broader university community and to disseminating examples of best practices. This applies to the internal community, such as students and staff, and the external community, such as alumni, businesses or public institutions. VŠE will support and strengthen these communities. It will also expand its support for volunteering. Fulfilling this strategic area will enable VŠE to contribute to the global SDGs: SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth, SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions, and especially SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals.

### Strategic Objective 1

**Promote and foster sustainability awareness and performance at VŠE through strong partnerships with internal and external stakeholders and communities and sharing best practices**

## Measures

- **Establish a network to support the staff, student and alumni engagement in cooperation with internal and external communities on sustainability.**
- **Establish a network to support the engagement of external partners and sustainability leaders from the corporate and public sectors.**
- **Organise an annual public multi-day event to strengthen internal and external collaboration and promote awareness sharing on sustainability issues, best practices, and volunteering.**
- **Support (accredited) student organisations focused on sustainability within VŠE.**
- **Actively participate in an international association promoting sustainability.**
- **Actively participate in a local association promoting sustainability.**
- **Establish strategic partnerships with the corporate sector to promote sustainability.**
- **Establish strategic partnerships with the public sector to promote sustainability.**
- **Effectively communicate information about events within the internal and external communication channels of VŠE.**
- **Establish rules for community cooperation and partnerships.**
- **Set up an evaluation mechanism for working with the community.**
- **Support student activities in the field of board games and similar activities.**

# Appendix

Ranking of SDGs (in order of total score), summary for all focus groups.

SDG	Total score (normalised)	Number of occurrences	Average ranking	Number of occurrences in the "top 5"
4	1.0000	54	1.69	54
8	0.4802	50	3.14	47
12	0.2290	39	4.79	26
3	0.1913	34	4.88	23
9	0.1509	36	6.31	22
5	0.1482	23	4.09	18
16	0.1443	32	5.81	19
11	0.0877	23	6.13	12
17	0.0859	26	7.04	12
13	0.0775	22	6.41	13
7	0.0683	23	7.30	11
6	0.0533	20	7.45	10
10	0.0429	19	8.05	9
15	0.0116	14	10.07	3
1	0.0105	15	11.07	4
2	0.0044	14	12.00	1
14	0.0000	13	12.62	1

Group	SDGs					
Students 7 May 2024						
Students 14 May 2024						
Students 10 June 2024						
Students 13 June 2024						
Management VŠE 18 June 2024						
Staff of the Rector's Office 7 May 2024						
Employees 25 June 2024						
Partners 31 July 2024						

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