



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

OF THE MARIA GRZEGORZEWSKA
UNIVERSITY





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Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We present to you the Sustainability Strategy of Maria Grzegorzewska University. The University's mission has been in line with UNESCO's priorities for sustainable development for many years and it cultivates awareness of its community, as well as its surroundings on its important social role, in line with the core mission expressed in the words: Acceptance, Participation, Social Solidarity.

Within the framework of strategic actions, we seek to monitor and communicate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals through:

- preparation of tools allowing to mark: lectures, research, education and implementation projects, as well as scientific and popular science publications, with relevant SDGs,
- providing trainings for administrative, teaching and research employees on marking and communicating the implementation of the abovementioned SDGs,
- publication of reports related to the implementation of the SDGs and social responsibility of the University.

To strengthen the implementation of the SDGs, the Maria Grzegorzewska University belongs to the research network CREAN - Children's Rights European Academic Network, IKA - International Korczak Association, UNESCO UniTwin and the Working Group on Social Responsibility of Universities under the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy. The University is also a signatory to the Declaration of Social Responsibility of Universities in Poland, Magna Charta Universitatum, and participates in the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment CoARA.

In this document, we present the key elements of our Sustainability Strategy, which is a complementary document to the 2021-2030 University Development Strategy of great importance, indicating ways to implement the 2021-2030 University Development Strategy through the lens of implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainability Strategy was developed by the Coordinator of Sustainability and Social Responsibility of the University in agreement with the Rector's Collegium and stakeholders concerned.

Best regards,
Vice-Rector for Development
Prof. Anna Odrowąż-Coates
30.06.2023



The Maria Grzegorzewska University (hereinafter: the "**Academy**" or "**APS**") as a learning and socially responsible community, is committed to educating its students in a way that is consistent with both local and global challenges of today's reality. The climate crisis and its effects, visible in the form of rising global average temperatures, declining biodiversity, or decreasing resources, make sustainability initiatives urgent. The Academy is dedicated to act both on and off campus to support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals [1], engaging its stakeholders, including the entire scholastic community, in its initiatives.

Considering the most significant challenges, based on the analysis of the current state of affairs, APS is committed to developing the following areas in sustainability:

1. Education,
2. Gender equality,
3. Diversity and Inclusion,
4. Biodiversity,
5. Energy,
6. Transport,
7. Circular economy and waste,
8. Water.

We see the potential for the University to improve the abovementioned areas.

At the same time in order to be able to develop the areas and carry out respective tasks, an appropriate structure of the University, as described later in this Strategy, is required.

We believe that our academic community can contribute to having a positive impact on local society and the environment, as well as reduce its negative impact.



[1] Sustainable Development Goals, set in the Agenda 2030 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



Goal 4 Education

Graduates of the Academy are in great part future teachers, and educators, therefore the Academy plays a key role in spreading knowledge in the field of sustainable development (Goal 4).

Currently, at the APS there are both optional and compulsory classes for students and PhD students in the field of sustainable development, the offer is constantly expanding. There are also training courses, webinars and meetings for students, doctoral students, and employees. The UNESCO Janusz Korczak Chair in Social Pedagogy has been operating at the University since 2004 and is one of the inspirations for the APS community to learn about and implement UNESCO priorities in teaching programs, classes, specialized seminars, workshops, and research topics. The UNESCO Chair's activities are in line with the UNESCO priorities in the humanities and social sciences and focus on the challenges of the modern world as indicated by the Sustainable Development Goals.

We run several sustainability projects with external funding, including the "**Attune- Activate the University for Climate Change**" project (2022-1-ES01-KA220-HED-000086351), **which aims to educate the entire Academy community about addressing climate change and the green transformation of the University.**

We also ensure that education at APS is of high standard, consistent with available knowledge and global trends, and **in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.**

In the field of education, the Academy plans:

1. Expanding the offer of educational meetings (webinars, scientific seminars, open lectures, workshops, film screenings, discussions) on sustainable development,
2. Expanding the offer of compulsory classes on sustainability,
3. Expanding the offer of optional classes on sustainability,
4. Continuing to implement and undertake new sustainable development projects,
5. Monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by marking publications, projects and subject syllabuses,
6. Including lectures on sustainability as part of adaptation days,
7. Good quality education in all fields of study, taking into account the current market, social and environmental needs.





Goal 5

Gender equality

The APS, as a University that educates in themes burdened by many gender stereotypes (e.g. early childhood pedagogy, care pedagogy, social work), **raises anti-discrimination awareness of the University community, counteracts discrimination and strives to achieve de facto gender equality** (Goal 5).

Taking the gender perspective into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the University's decisions, policies and activities enhances the quality of research and teaching, contributes to a sense of community and translates into psychological well-being at work, as well as while studying.

Currently, the APS offers compulsory classes for students and doctoral students on **human rights, including gender equality**, as well as optional classes, webinars, meetings on **anti-discrimination law and selected aspects of gender equality**, e.g. counteracting violence. A lecture entitled Gender Equality is delivered at the **Centre for Teaching Excellence** for both academic and administrative staff.

Bearing in mind the need to deliberately, systematically and consciously **assess each policy and action from the perspective of its impact on the living conditions of women and men**, the APS has a Working group for Equality, the Anti-Mobbing and Anti-Discrimination Committee, the Mediator, the Ombudsman for Academic Rights and Values. The University also supports the activities of the Student Association for Gender Equality (Gender Equality Forum) and the Sexology Student Association (which addresses issues such as transgenderism).

Striving to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, **the APS further plans to:**

1. Develop the offer of compulsory and optional classes, as well as meetings on gender equality and anti-discrimination law,
2. Carry out an analysis of anti-discrimination and anti-mobbing ordinances covering all groups of the University community,
3. Develop recommendations for integrating gender and intersectionality into research projects (at the level of planned research and data analysis),
4. Incorporate the University's equality policy into training during adaptation days,
5. Create and implement guidelines on gender proportional representation on lists of candidates for elected bodies, committees, panels,
6. Diagnose the needs of those returning to research and teaching after parental leave and the extent of support from the University.





Goal 10 Diversity and inclusion

The Academy's priority is to provide solutions enabling persons with disabilities to actively participate in the Academy's activities. Among the solutions that make it possible to study or work at the APS are: readers, NFC signage, assistant support, adaptation of classes and credits to the needs of persons with disabilities. The Rector's Plenipotentiary for Persons with Disabilities coordinates and initiates activities for accessibility, as well as organizes training for staff and students regarding work with persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the APS has a degree program in Special Pedagogy and a number of majors have subjects that concern special pedagogy and disability.

We promote and practice inclusion by combating inequalities in aspects as i.a. gender identity, ethnicity, faith or economic status. This is implemented by the entire community, including student associations, such as the Sexology Student Association, the IDEM Student Association and the "Disability Studies" Student Association.

We aim to support the implementation of Goal 10 and 4 by education and by setting the example through our good practices. Accordingly, we plan to:

1. Continue to conduct classes on diversity and inclusion, maintained at the highest possible level, taking into account the developing knowledge base,
2. Enrich the offer of solutions at the University for the highest possible accessibility and equalization of opportunities,
3. Cooperate with external organizations to exchange knowledge, good practices and solutions,
4. Promote internships concerning working with persons with disabilities, and in NGOs, working against inequalities in various aspects,
5. Take into account the needs of diverse groups of stakeholders including persons with disabilities in new investments,
6. Take into account the impact of various regulations, policies and decisions on diverse stakeholders.





Goal 15 Biodiversity

According to the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 15), the conservation of biodiversity should be one of the priorities among sustainable development activities. Wildlife populations have declined by an average of 69% since 1970 globally [2].

The APS is committed to taking care of biodiversity on the University campus, but also to engaging in activities outside the campus.

We currently have a hedgehog house, an insect house and birdhouses on campus and we look after the landscape.

Seeking to conserve biodiversity, the Academy plans:

1. Taking care of green areas, including sowing flower meadows, planting more flora,
2. Looking after the animals living in the area surrounding the University - maintaining the hedgehog house, insect house and bird houses, as well as other ways to protect small animals,
3. Taking care of the greenery in the premises of the University: introducing as many plants as possible in offices and corridors,
4. Participating in off-campus biodiversity conservation activities,
5. Organizing educational meetings for the whole academic community on biodiversity,
6. Encouraging the Academic Community to reduce the use of animal-tested products if possible,
7. Encouraging the Academic Community to get involved in volunteering and to adopt animals responsibly rather than buying them.

[2] „Living Planet Report 2022” WWF, <https://www.wwf.pl/living-planet-report-2022>





Goal 7 Energy

Energy transformation constitutes a key element of addressing the climate crisis. **We seek to educate about energy efficiency and conservation, as well as reduction of greenhouse gas emissions** by gradual introduction of appropriate technologies on campus and verification of our actions.

We are currently running an educational campaign on energy saving and reducing the University's operating hours in order to consume less electricity. In addition, we are gradually changing the technology at the University to more energy-efficient solutions (including energy-saving lightbulbs). Motion sensors are installed in the toilets and in some corridors so that the lighting is only switched on when necessary. The new premises of the University are designed in a way that allows as much access to daylight as possible so that lighting is not needed for much of the day. However, we see room for growth.

In line with Sustainable Development Goal 7, the APS has already carried out an energy audit.

In order to reduce energy consumption and lower greenhouse gas emissions, the Academy plans to:

1. Continue the gradual change of technology at the University (including changing light bulbs to energy-efficient ones),
2. Look for renewable energy solutions that would be suitable, given the University's infrastructure (for example small photovoltaic panels),
3. Carry out continuous information campaigns on the importance of and ways to save energy,
4. Conduct thematic meetings and webinars,
5. Seek and implement new methods of energy conservation at the APS.





Goal 12 Transport

Transport accounts for about a quarter of all CO₂ emissions in the European Union [3], therefore reduction of emissions from transport is included in this Strategy. The city of Warsaw is taking on initiatives concerning the reduction of combustion traffic in the city.

The APS is located in a well-connected location, with good accessibility to public transport (trams, buses, Zachodni Train Station), which encourages students and employees to use these forms of transport. There is a city bike station next to the entrance to the campus.

Furthermore, we have bicycle racks, located in different parts of the University campus, so that they are easily accessible and encourage bicycle transport.

In addition, the APS will promote reducing the use of air transport, when possible, particularly in favour of rail transport.

As transport practices change, the following is planned:

1. Encouraging Green Travel as part of Erasmus+ mobility,
2. Conducting an information campaign on conscious and responsible transport,
3. In a few years' time after the introduction of renewable energy sources, introducing chargers for electric cars,
4. Promoting low carbon transport at APS, including encouraging the use of cycle parking spaces at the University,
5. Introducing information on the carbon footprint generated by travelling into travel applications in the next few years,
6. Promoting the shortest possible supply chain to reduce carbon emissions.

[3] CO₂ emissions from cars: facts and figures (infographics), the European Parliament
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20190313STO31218/co2-emissions-from-cars-facts-and-figures-infographics>





Goal 12

Circular economy and waste

As data from 2023 indicates, the global economy is now a circular economy [4] at only 7.2% [5] and the situation is getting worse every year due to the increasing exploitation and use of resources.

The APS is committed to introducing innovations, as well as continuing the already well-functioning circular economy and waste management solutions.

Within the Academy, we have an ongoing exchange of clothes, toys, plants and shoes. Furthermore, we have trashcans available on each corridor, which enable recycling. In the event of renovations, furniture already available at the Academy is used and the purchase of new materials is kept to a minimum. Drinking water faucets, without cups, are publicly available on the APS, thanks to which the use of disposable bottles and cups is reduced.

In pursuit of a circular economy, the Academy seeks to:

1. Continue the ongoing swap of clothes and other items on hangers available at the University,
2. Create a shelf dedicated to book exchange,
3. Cooperate with the University's food service providers (cafes, restaurants) to reduce the production of waste in the form of disposable food and beverage packaging,
4. Promote the use of drinking water faucets at the University to further encourage the use of reusable bottles and not using disposable bottles,
5. Continue to recycle and educate on how to choose the right recycling category, as well as how to prepare the product to be recycled,
6. Promote the reduction of printing and use of paper when not necessary,
7. Strive to introduce electric document circulation to reduce paper consumption.

[4] „The circular economy is a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the life cycle of products is extended. In practice, it implies reducing waste to a minimum. When a product reaches the end of its life, its materials are kept within the economy wherever possible thanks to recycling. These can be productively used again and again, thereby creating further value.”

Circular economy: definition, importance and benefits, the European Parliament

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits>

[5] Circle Economy. (2023), The circularity gap report 2023, <https://www.circularity-gap.world/2023>





Goal 6 Water

Poland is one of the countries in Europe with the smallest amount of water per capita [6]. Irresponsible water management is causing fresh and clean water resources to become increasingly limited, which is why **pursuing Goal 6 is a priority area in our sustainability activities.**

We are currently running a water-saving information campaign and looking after the green areas around the University to support water retention. Water aerators are installed on taps. We also take care of the availability of drinking water in the University by having drinking water faucets in the corridors. We constantly monitor the condition of the water systems to ensure the highest possible efficiency and to avoid wasting water.

As part of its efforts to save and conserve water, the Academy recognizes the need to intensify the efforts and plans to:

1. Create more drinking water faucets at the University,
2. Introduce programs to enable water reuse,
3. Carry ongoing information campaigns on water saving,
4. Seek water-saving solutions at the University,
5. Hold educational meetings on the sustainable use and conservation of marine and aquatic resources, including buying fish from certified farms,
6. Waste action is foreseen under this Strategy, which supports the reduction of pollution of waters.

[6] Water resources in Poland, GUS (Central Statistical Office), <https://raportsdg.stat.gov.pl/2020/cel6.html>



University Structure and Monitoring

In order to ensure the implementation of the Sustainability Strategy, it is necessary to have appropriate management arrangements and bodies at the University, within which the particular areas of this Strategy will be implemented. They are presented below:

1. **Vice-Rector for Development** – supervision of pro-equality and pro-ecological activities,
2. **Coordinator of Sustainability and Social Responsibility of the University:**
 - a. coordination of sustainability matters at the University,
 - b. implementation of sustainable development activities, meetings and initiatives,
 - c. advising on sustainable development,
 - d. submissions to sustainability rankings.
3. **Advisory Board for Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility:**
 - a. advisory for the Rector's Collegium,
 - b. initiation of activities in cooperation with the community,
 - c. making conclusions, recommendations, appeals,
 - d. advising on development, promotion, cooperation activities,
 - e. seeking strategic initiatives,
 - f. undertaking corrective measures in areas requiring intervention,
 - g. cooperation with the University's Accessibility Council and stakeholders.
4. **Working group for Equality**
 - a. development of an equality plan,
 - b. creation, adaptation and testing tools for obtaining data on equality policy and well-being in this regard of employees and students of the APS,
 - c. initiating, monitoring, reporting, and preparing reports on the tasks undertaken,
 - d. cooperation with the Advisory Board for Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility and the Rector's Collegium in the scope of executed tasks,
 - e. editing information for the APS website regarding ongoing tasks,
 - f. seeking strategic initiatives related to the implementation of sustainable development principles,
 - g. preparation of corrective solutions in areas requiring intervention, within the framework of performed tasks.
5. **Working group for Ecology**
 - a. developing proposals for pro-ecological activities aimed at spreading environmental awareness among students, employees and the Academic Community of the APS,
 - b. adaptation of tools for obtaining data on pro-ecological activities,
 - c. initiating, monitoring, reporting of the tasks carried out,
 - d. cooperation with the Advisory Board for Sustainable Development and Social Responsibility and the Rector's Collegium in the scope of executed tasks,
 - e. collection of data on publication, scientific and teaching activities of employees,
 - f. editing information for the APS website regarding the executed tasks,
 - g. seeking strategic initiatives related to the implementation of sustainable development principles,
 - h. preparation of corrective solutions in areas requiring intervention, within the framework of the tasks performed.

University Structure and Monitoring

6. Rector's Plenipotentiary for the Persons with Disabilities

- a. support of applications for conditional semester passing in the situation of exceeding the number of failed subjects indicated in the regulations,
- b. providing an opinion on leave requests,
- c. providing recommendations to increase absences from classes with the possibility of setting individual dates with lecturers to make up for them,
- d. developing a customized approach in solving educational problems related to the pandemic (e.g., proposing alternative forms of achieving learning outcomes),
- e. obtaining individual consultations with a scientific and methodological assistant,
- f. obtaining the assistance of a sign language interpreter while participating in online classes,
- g. obtaining renewal of disability certificates that expired during the pandemic in USOS,
- h. free rental of equipment for remote learning,
- i. obtaining support from the Academic Psychological Counseling Center,
- j. organizing substitute forms of classes in the Studium of Physical Education and Sports,
- k. assistance in the adaptation of teaching materials, and obtaining materials in digital versions.

7. Academic Psychological Counselling Center

Free of charge psychological assistance for students and employees, provided by qualified psychologists in the form of:

- a. psychological consultation,
- b. psychological counselling,
- c. crisis intervention,
- d. psycho-educational workshops,
- e. individual psychotherapy,
- f. group psychotherapy.

8. Ombudsman for Ethics and Academic Ethos

- a. monitoring violations of academic rights and values at the APS,
- b. undertaking action in cases of violations referred to in point a, in particular by informing persons and entities affected by such violations of their rights and actions that can be undertaken; supporting such persons and entities in asserting their rights before competent authorities or other entities operating at the APS; using conciliation methods to resolve disputes and ease tensions,
- c. taking measures to prevent behavior that violates academic rights and values,
- d. cooperation with entities established at the APS to protect academic rights and values.

9. Disciplinary Ombudsmen

- a. Disciplinary Ombudsmen for Academic Teachers,
- b. Disciplinary Ombudsmen for Students,
- c. Disciplinary Ombudsmen for Doctoral Students.

Moreover, the University has a Student Council and Student Associations that as part of their Statutes or activities include sustainable development. These include the Ecology Association, the Student Volunteer Office, the AZS (Sports Association), the "Disability Studies" Student Association, and the Sexology Student Association.



We believe that thanks to the right partnerships with local authorities, other universities and NGOs, we are able to make changes.

Preparation:

Katarzyna Soszyńska, Coordinator of Sustainability and Social Responsibility of the University

Dr Monika Zima-Parjaszewska, in the scope of Gender Equality

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Working group for Ecology 29.06.2023

Working group for Equality 16.06.2023

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Doctoral Students Council 16.06.2023

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