



University of Vaasa
VAASAN YLIOPISTO

Sustainability report 2025



Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
Environment	4
Emission reduction goals	7
Responsible investment	7
Social sustainability	8
Sustainability and Responsibility Agenda	10
Sustainable Development Goals	12
Research	20
Education	20
Positive impact	22
Recognition and Impact in 2025	23
Energy and Sustainability Leadership	23
Climate Leadership Coalition Membership	24
Formal Commitments to Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability	24
Conclusion	25

Introduction



The University of Vaasa's strategy sets out an ambitious goal: to become an internationally recognised research university by 2030, with a clear focus on research impacts. We believe this impact can take many forms. Taking a leadership role in sustainability comes naturally to us, given our location in the Nordic energy capital. Our research projects integrate innovation and discovery to help both industry and society achieve sustainability goals such as climate action and affordable, clean energy.

Beyond research, we aim to have a lasting impact on the companies and communities around us by delivering meaningful education and developing talent in a multidisciplinary environment. At the University of Vaasa, we strive to advance the common good by fostering new knowledge, education, and sustainable innovation—while minimising the costs we impose on the environment and society.

This 2025 report outlines our sustainability targets and reviews how successfully we met them over the past year. We aim to integrate the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability into everything we do.

To begin, it is worth clarifying what sustainability means. At its core, sustainability is about strength, stability, and resilience. In practice, the concept plays out in several interconnected ways. First, sustainability concerns the vitality of individuals, species, communities, and ecosystems. Second, it refers to the functionality and continuity of societies, economies, cultures, and other systems and organisations rooted in human activity. In this sense, it also encompasses the durability and reliable function of human-made objects, devices, and structures. Finally, sustainability relates to the strength and longevity of human thought, decisions, and commitments. All these dimensions are relevant when we consider the sustainability work carried out at the University of Vaasa.

Environment

Carbon footprint

We are working toward carbon neutrality by 2030 for our Scope 1 and 2 emissions—that is, the direct emissions from our laboratory activities (VEBIC and Technobothnia), vehicles, and purchased energy (electricity and heat). Getting there takes targeted action: avoiding and reducing emissions wherever possible, expanding our zero-emission energy contracts, and offsetting any emissions that remain. We continuously track both our emissions and the effectiveness of our measures, which tells us how much further we need to go. This work supports the Paris Agreement.

The University of Vaasa has conducted an annual carbon footprint assessment since 2019. Our footprint is calculated through the Hansel Procurement Pulse system, which draws on purchase invoices and, where needed, data from service providers in areas such as waste management, cleaning, and campus restaurants. In parallel, the Granlund Manager solution measures our energy consumption and the associated energy footprint. The calculations exclude travel-related emissions from commuting between home and campus, as well as emissions from lunches served at campus restaurants. In leaving these out, the University of Vaasa follows the shared guidelines agreed upon by Finnish universities.

The Procurement Pulse calculation is based on the ENVIMAT model developed by the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), in which carbon footprint estimates for different procurement categories are derived from the average carbon footprints of products available on the Finnish market. The calculation incorporates an inflation adjustment and also accounts for the fact that the University of Vaasa purchases electricity produced without fossil fuels. This year, for the first time, Hansel also produced a nature footprint assessment based on the open-access BIOVALENT database developed by the University of Jyväskylä. The two metrics complement each other: the carbon footprint describes the climate impact, while the nature footprint describes the impact on the diversity of species.

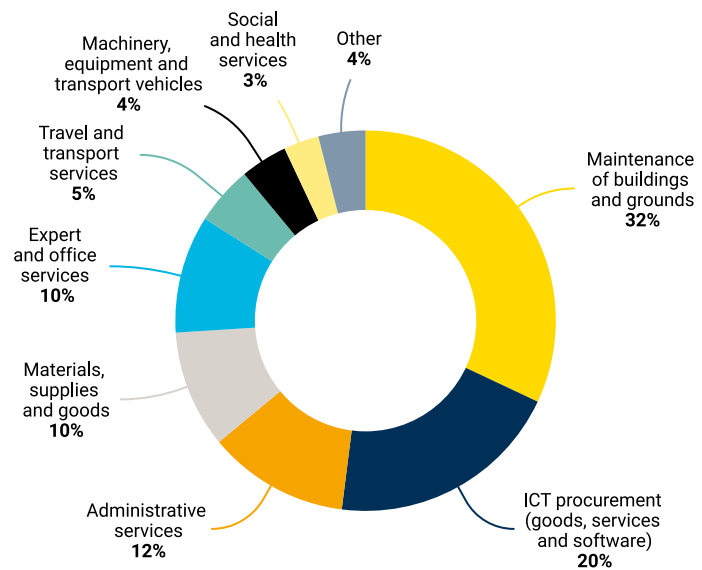
The University of Vaasa's carbon footprint in 2025 totalled 4.22 million kg CO₂-equivalent, compared with 3.68 million kg CO₂-equivalent in 2024 — an increase of nearly 15 percent. At the same time, the total value of purchase invoices grew by more than 16 percent.

Carbon dioxide emissions and categories

Total 4.22 M kg CO₂-equivalent

Other (4%):

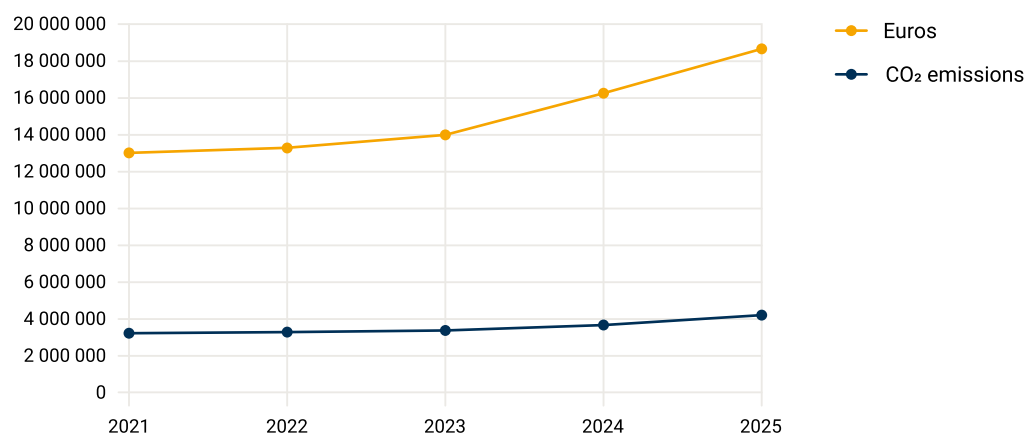
Accommodation and catering services 1.9%
Education and cultural services 1.7%
Construction 0.05%



The University of Vaasa's strategic goal is to increase the number of students, degrees awarded, research output, and external project funding. As this growth continues, the university's carbon footprint is also increasing; however, it is rising more slowly than overall operational volume, as measured by purchase invoices. In 2025, the carbon footprint per capita—across 7,017 students and 715 staff—was approximately 546 kg CO₂-equivalent.

Annual trend in purchase invoices and CO₂ emissions

Development 2021–2025



The three largest emission categories all fell under Scope 3: the maintenance of buildings and grounds (1.34 million kg CO₂e, or 32%), ICT procurement—goods, services, and software (860 tonnes CO₂e, 20%), and administrative services (500 tonnes CO₂e, 12%). The steepest year-on-year increase, however, was in materials, supplies, and goods, which rose by nearly 50 percent (429 tonnes CO₂e, 10%). Meanwhile, the welcome downward trend in emissions from travel and transport services continued. In 2025, these emissions came to 190 tonnes CO₂e (5%)—almost

20 percent less than the previous year and 34 percent less than in 2019. With this, we reached our 2030 target of cutting travel emissions by at least 30 percent—five years early.

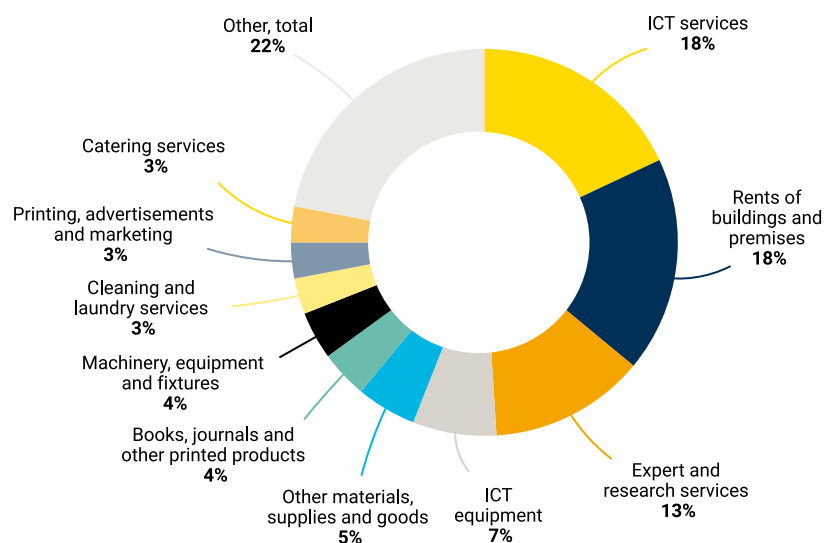
Own vehicles and transport, which belong to the Scope 1, accounted for 1 percent of total emissions (54.8 t CO₂e); the water, heating, and energy consumption of properties, belonging to the Scope 2, accounted for 6 percent (230.5 t CO₂e); and all other emissions, belonging to the Scope 3, accounted for around 93 percent (3.9 million kg CO₂e).

Nature footprint

The nature footprint is measured as a biodiversity equivalent (BDe), which describes the proportion of all the world's species that would likely be lost globally (the potentially disappeared fraction of species globally). To calculate the nature impact of procurement – that is, of consumption – this method requires, in practice, four elements: 1) the type and quantity of the consumption under review, 2) the type and quantity of the driver of nature impact resulting from that consumption, 3) the geographical location of the driver, and 4) the harm the driver causes to biodiversity in that location. The calculation method has been developed in the School of Resource Wisdom at the University of Jyväskylä (JYU.Wisdom), and the assessment is based on the BIOVALENT database. Put simply, the nature footprint is obtained in the calculation as the product of the nature impact coefficient and the quantity of consumption.

The University of Vaasa's nature footprint in 2025 totalled 10.5 nBDe, or 0.00000105 %. This figure describes the proportion of all the world's species that are at risk of disappearing if activity were to continue unchanged. According to the assessment, the University of Vaasa's most significant nature footprint categories were ICT services and equipment (25%), buildings (18%), expert and research services (a 13% share), and books, journals, and other printed products (4%). The categories with the greatest impact – that is, with the highest impact coefficients – were, in turn, materials, supplies, and goods; machinery, equipment, and fixtures; cleaning agents and supplies; sanitation; foodstuffs; and construction, repair, and maintenance services.

Biodiversity footprint breakdown



Emission reduction goals

We aim to cut **travel-related emissions (Scope 3) by 30–50% by 2030 compared to 2019 levels**. Prioritising remote participation in meetings and conferences whenever feasible and reasonable can help us achieve this. Nearly 80% of our travel emissions come from flying, so we carefully assess the necessity of each flight and, where possible, replace it with rail travel—including for international journeys.

The University of Vaasa campus renovation project (2019–2024) has enabled more effective use of space and, in turn, greater energy efficiency. Sensor-based automation—which adjusts or switches off lights and ventilation as needed—combined with more efficient space utilisation, such as shared teaching facilities, has delivered energy savings of up to 10%.

We are **committed to steadily reducing emissions from waste management, cleaning, and catering**. Working closely with our contracted service providers, we focus on minimising food waste and other forms of waste. We are also exploring a shift towards plant-based catering for meetings and events. **Our library prioritises electronic materials** to reduce paper and printing-related emissions, and we carry out thorough **needs assessments and environmental impact evaluations for procurement** through competitive tendering, further supporting our emission reduction efforts.

Responsible investment

The University of Vaasa divides its investments between its main portfolio and the Viljo Syrenius Fund (Viljo Syreniuksen rahasto). In both cases, investment management continues to prioritise environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria. Our portfolios maintain strong ESG ratings—an A rating for the main portfolio and an AA rating for the Viljo Syrenius Fund—and the carbon risk associated with each has trended downward since 2018, reflecting our ongoing commitment to responsible investment.

We also aim to keep exposure to exclusionary themes low across both portfolios, by minimising investments in companies engaged in activities that conflict with the Principles for Responsible Investment. These include alcohol, tobacco, gambling, civilian firearms, weapons, cluster bombs, landmines, nuclear power, and genetically modified organisms.

Social Sustainability

We recognise the importance of measuring and reporting on the positive impacts—or “handprints”—of our activities, whether ecological, social, cultural, or economic. Our mission is to advance scientific knowledge and help shape informed, responsible citizens, and success in research and education lies at the heart of the university's positive contribution to society.

The university continues to explore earmarking part of its internal research funding for projects that promote ESG principles and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, drawing on all our fields: business, engineering, management, and communication studies. In 2025, this orientation was visible in a substantial body of research and educational work on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), neurodiversity, and social sustainability more broadly. Projects across our schools examined inclusive workplaces, accessible digital services, equitable energy transition, and neurodiversity in higher education—bringing our research expertise directly to bear on social-sustainability challenges and feeding the resulting knowledge back into our own teaching and practice.

Within our own community, our Equality Plan and Accessibility Plan help everyone participate in shared activities. As set out in our Code of Conduct, every member of the university community has the right to a safe, equal, and equitable study and working environment. We value equality, non-discrimination, involvement, and a strong sense of community, which requires our physical, social, and digital environments to be designed so that everyone can interact on an equal footing—and that diverse groups have a voice in the decisions affecting them.

We translate these principles into the physical campus. Alongside our existing silent and prayer room, which serves staff and students of all faiths and those seeking quiet, in 2025 we developed a dedicated neurodiverse space designed to reduce sensory load and offer a calm, predictable environment for studying and working. Together, these facilities reflect a practical commitment to accessibility that goes beyond compliance and responds to the real diversity of our community.

Diversity is one of the clearest measures of our social sustainability, and we report on it openly. Our staff community is truly international, comprising 51 nationalities, with international employees accounting for around 30% of personnel. We track gender balance at every level of the academic and administrative hierarchy, which helps us see where representation is uneven. As of 2025, the breakdown was roughly:

- Professors: 20% women / 80% men
- All teaching and research staff: 43% women / 57% men
- Administrative and support staff: 69% women / 31% men

We review these figures annually to track progress towards a more balanced profile in roles where one gender is under-represented. Our student body reflects a similar breadth: a notable share of students live with a physical or mental disability or identify as neurodiverse. We have therefore invested in accessible learning arrangements, individual study support, and the physical adaptations

described above, and we continue to develop these services in dialogue with the students who use them.

Continuous learning and sustainable career development are core elements of our social responsibility. Our employee experience programme strategically emphasises professional growth, sustainable careers, inclusivity, well-being, and supportive working conditions. Competence development is systematically embedded in our operations: development needs are identified through annual strategy, financial and personnel planning, and regular performance and development discussions, which guide unit and individual development plans as well as training and support from HR, Research Services, and other internal actors. Our career model, with transparent criteria, supports long-term development.

Learning opportunities are diverse and flexible, reflecting different employee groups and career stages. Staff participate in internal training, external courses, conferences, seminars, and mobility, supported by university- and unit-level resources. Development time follows university-level guidelines and is tailored to individual roles, with annual work plans agreed with supervisors ensuring time for development and well-being. Regular staff surveys gather insights on development opportunities and well-being, including employees' ability to develop and use their expertise. In 2025, staff completed 3,826 training hours, mainly reflecting internal training, as external learning data is not yet comprehensively captured.

We aim for stable, high-quality employment. In 2025, approximately 47% of staff held permanent contracts and 53% fixed-term or other arrangements, the latter reflecting the project-based nature of much externally funded research. We are working to increase the share of permanent positions where the nature of the work allows, and to ensure that fixed-term staff have clear development paths.

Improving working conditions goes well beyond running a survey. Biennial workplace well-being surveys review our performance on DEI and our overall operating culture, but they are one input among several: we also work continuously through our occupational health partnership, an early-support model for managing workload, management and supervisory training, flexible and remote-working arrangements, ergonomic support, and lower-threshold feedback channels that let issues surface between survey cycles. Crucially, survey results are not left on the shelf—findings are reviewed at university and unit level, and each unit develops concrete action plans from its own results. To reinforce a safe and respectful environment, in 2025 we ran university-wide anti-harassment and anti-discrimination training, helping every member of the community recognise inappropriate behaviour, understand their rights and responsibilities, and know how to raise concerns through our harassment contact persons and reporting channels.

Our social-sustainability commitments extend to whom we do business with. Our supplier selection process applies clear and strict requirements: we choose suppliers that operate in accordance with EU standards on human rights, fair labour practices, and other aspects of social sustainability, and that meet our expectations on cybersecurity and data protection. These requirements are built into our procurement criteria and contractual terms, so that responsibility is enforced through our choices as a buyer, not only through the conduct of our own staff.

Finally, in 2025 we continued to strengthen internal communication and networking through Viva Engage, which enables low-threshold idea sharing and connection across the university community. Gender equality and the integration of international staff and students remain central to our social-sustainability goals, supported by the inclusive spaces, fair employment practices, and continuous-development opportunities described above.

Sustainability and Responsibility Agenda

Our sustainability and responsibility agenda (2025–2035) is built around four areas: research, education, campus, and cooperation. It covers every dimension of sustainability and responsibility—social, economic, environmental, and governance-related. Together, the Sustainability Committee and the Management Team at the University of Vaasa track our progress using a traffic light system that shows how far we’ve come toward each goal. (Please read the table below one cell at a time rather than row by row: each cell is a separate goal, and the cells don’t line up into complete rows.)

Table 1: University of Vaasa’s Sustainability and Responsibility Agenda 2025–2035

- This objective has been broadly achieved.
- We are on track to achieve this goal, but there is still work to be done.
- Achieving this goal is still in its infancy and will require a lot of effort.

Research	Education	Campus, our own functions and administration	Social impact and collaboration
The University of Vaasa’s research activities focus, among other priorities, on tackling major sustainability challenges.	Sustainability studies form part of all our degree programmes and lifelong learning offerings.	The University of Vaasa inspires and encourages students and staff to act on sustainable development and responsibility—through blogs, sustainability-themed events, and our annual Science Day, among other channels.	The University of Vaasa is committed to preventing all forms of discrimination, and every member of our community is encouraged to help create a safer, more inclusive environment for everyone.
Our research projects address multiple dimensions of sustainability and responsibility, including environmental, social, economic, and governance-related aspects.	All University of Vaasa graduates understand their responsibility to promote and advance sustainability. We, in collaboration with other Finnish universities, will implement a mechanism to evaluate students’ sustainability literacy at both the beginning and the conclusion of their studies.	We set concrete, absolute targets for reducing climate emissions. The guiding principle is to avoid and reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, and operate sustainably.	We integrate sustainability and responsibility objectives into our procurement strategies and continue to develop our procurement expertise.

Research	Education	Campus, our own functions and administration	Social impact and collaboration
We support inter-disciplinarity, open science, and a global perspective in our work on sustainability challenges.	As a member of the Green Skills Vaasa Network, we complement our SDG-related curricula with more vocationally oriented training, courses, and challenges. Through the network, we are also developing a new Sustainability Day concept.	We are committed to protecting biodiversity and are assessing the impact of our activities on it.	We actively strengthen science communication to reach audiences beyond the scientific community.
	We promote fair and equitable access to education both nationally and globally.	We encourage the university community to recycle, reuse, and reduce consumption.	We will develop a unified strategy for university engagement with NGOs, covering research, student volunteering, and the creation of educational resources.
	We accommodate different life situations by offering flexible study and participation options for students affected by illness, specific health needs, or learning difficulties, as well as those with young children or single-parent responsibilities.	We will put in place governance measures to take a clear stand against forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour, ensuring that our operations and partnerships align with ethical standards and contribute to a just and equitable society.	We promote the application of research-driven innovations in society, for example, through entrepreneurship and corporate partnerships.
	We strengthen the positive impact of skilled and educated graduates through work placements, which provide practical experience and enhance employability by connecting students with potential employers in their fields of study. Our graduate employment rate is among the highest in Finland: 91% of students who graduated in 2024 were employed in 2025.	International staff and students can fully take part in university community life, including events and development activities.	Clean energy and energy efficiency remain central themes of our annual Science Day, a flagship outreach activity.
		The university is committed to international efforts to promote and safeguard academic freedom, for instance, through the Scholars at Risk network.	We collaborate with businesses to develop SDG-focused competitions, startup funding, internship programmes, and interdisciplinary student projects.
		We have implemented systematic outreach programmes that address health and well-being, encompassing nutrition, sports, physical activity, and related subjects.	The university and its partners are committed to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment (UN PRI), which address environmental, social, and governance concerns.

Sustainable Development Goals

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) closely align with the mission of the University of Vaasa. By focusing on sustainable energy, business, and society, we contribute not only to specific goals but also to the broader aim of building a sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all. We are committed to the SDGs as part of our ethical and responsible way of operating, concentrating on those that best match our academic strengths and that offer the greatest potential for positive societal impact in line with our strategic priorities.

In 2025, the University of Vaasa achieved its best-ever result in the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings, which assess universities' success in advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The university was placed in the global top 300 in three key areas: Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Climate Action (SDG 13), and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16). It also shared first place in Finland in Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7) and Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8).

2025 also marked the first time the university was evaluated in three additional SDGs: Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9), and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10). This brought the total number of reported SDGs to nine—the highest to date—reflecting the university's growing impact and deepening commitment to sustainable development.

Our priorities for SDGs continue to be:

SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy. Given our location at the heart of the largest energy technology hub in the Nordic countries, we have a particular responsibility to lead the way in sustainability. We are developing more efficient methods for producing, storing, and distributing energy, such as innovative battery technologies and smart grid solutions that enhance energy management and reduce waste. In 2025, major research initiatives included hydrogen technology research supported by a €120,000 donation from the Riitta and Jorma J. Takanen Foundation and the completion of the WSTAR research environment for energy efficiency in data centres.

SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. We promote sustainable economic growth that takes environmental and social considerations into account. We produce scientific knowledge on how to create working conditions and practices that respect human rights and promote the well-being of all employees, such as implementing fair labour practices, ensuring safe work environments, and providing opportunities for professional development. Our graduate employment rate remains strong: 91% of our 2022 graduates were employed in 2023.

SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Research and education play a crucial role in disseminating new innovations and technologies. We develop production processes that help conserve natural resources and reduce environmental impact, such as

implementing energy-efficient technologies and utilising sustainable materials in our manufacturing practices. In 2025, we deepened our cooperation through strategic agreements with Hitachi and Danfoss and began planning a joint research and competence centre with AGCO Power focused on engine technology for low-carbon energy solutions.

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities. Together with a range of partners, we generate scientific knowledge and urban and regional development solutions that help build sustainable communities and cities. In June 2025, the University of Vaasa and Vaasa University of Applied Sciences established a new higher education consortium to strengthen regional expertise and broaden educational provision.

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production. We encourage more environmentally friendly consumption practices and contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer responsibility and agency, which includes promoting sustainable products, reducing waste, and educating consumers about the environmental impact of their choices. Responsible consumption is one essential element of a broader sustainable lifestyle.

SDG 13 – Climate Action. EnergyWeek 2025 in March was a flagship occasion, where researchers, policymakers and industry leaders gathered in Vaasa to discuss innovative energy solutions and university–company collaboration. Climate-focused academic work continued through the year as well, including an October 2025 dissertation on how communicating climate-change adaptation can evoke conflicting emotions.

SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. We produce scientific knowledge on questions of peace, justice, and good governance. Our research is distinguished by a comprehensive security approach, which combines political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions of security. In 2025, we significantly strengthened this area of work by launching the Preparedness and Resilience Research Platform (PREP).

The links below will take you to university news about the various SDGs in 2025:

1 No poverty

The UN's Sustainable Development Agenda seeks to eliminate extreme poverty. Extreme poverty is described as a lack of the most basic essentials of life, including food, clothing, and shelter. The University of Vaasa focuses on themes such as energy and transportation poverty. Energy poverty is defined as the inability to meet basic demands due to high energy costs. Transport poverty is defined as the inability to travel to places where one's basic requirements can be supplied with reasonable effort, expense, and time.

2 Zero hunger

Hunger means that a person lacks food. It may be quantitative or qualitative, chronic or acute. Issues of equality and social responsibility are inextricably linked to fighting hunger and feeding the world's rapidly rising population. South Ostrobothnia is a thriving food production region that produces beef, milk, and grain. The University of Vaasa conducts food research, focusing on consumer behaviour and the circular economy. Many of our partners are food enterprises that operate in South Ostrobothnia, including local farms, dairy producers, and grain processors, which contribute to the region's robust food production ecosystem.

Good and bad vegetarian food

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/articles/good-and-bad-vegetarian-food>

3 Good health and well-being

Researchers at the University of Vaasa use nature-based methods to promote mental health and well-being in a variety of social and health services, as well as youth work. Work-life balance and human resource management challenges are strongly related to health and well-being, as they can significantly impact employee stress levels and overall job satisfaction, which in turn affect mental health outcomes. Our management researchers investigate the conditions that promote health and well-being from the perspectives of clients and patients, as well as experts and professionals.

Neurodiversity at the University of Vaasa: Diversity enriches the learning environment

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/articles/neurodiversity-university-vaasa-diversity-enriches-learning-environment>

4 Quality education

The University of Vaasa collaborates with industries and organisations for research and education. We strongly support student innovation. Vaasa's higher education institutions share a startup space on campus, which allows for new experiments, networking, and the development of entrepreneurial skills. The University of Vaasa uses a CoDoc collaboration model that incorporates a company's or another organisation's demands and research interests into a doctoral student's research topic.

Danfoss Drives and University of Vaasa form strategic alliance to power innovation and student opportunities

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/danfoss-drives-and-university-vaasa-form-strategic-alliance-power-innovation-and-student>

University of Vaasa and Wärtsilä launch CoDoc collaboration to bridge research with product development

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/university-vaasa-and-wartsila-launch-codoc-collaboration-bridge-research-product-development>

5 Gender equality

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals have designated gender equality and women's rights as a cross-cutting subject due to their intrinsic link to sustainable development. Everyone in an equal learning and working community can work without facing discrimination due to their gender, gender identity, gender expression, or any other personal characteristic. The University of Vaasa's equality and non-discrimination strategy includes both actions to promote gender equality and those required by the Non-Discrimination Act, such as implementing training programmes, establishing support networks, and ensuring equal opportunities in hiring and promotions.

International hackathon sparks innovative collaboration between students, sustainability experts and companies to create inclusive business growth practices

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/international-hackathon-sparks-innovative-collaboration-between-students>

6 Clean water and sanitation

Water is necessary for human survival. It maintains the body's fluid equilibrium, controls temperature, and is an important component of metabolism. Access to clean water and sanitation are fundamental factors in promoting the general health and well-being of a population. In line with this goal, the University of Vaasa has upgraded its heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems as part of the broader campus project that also features water-saving faucets and new energy-efficient dishwashers.

7 Affordable and Clean Energy

Energy-related research and education are top priorities at the University of Vaasa. For instance, research conducted on the VEBIC research platform contributes to the development of more efficient methods of energy production, storage, and distribution. This will simultaneously reduce reliance on vulnerable energy sources, such as fossil fuels, by promoting the use of renewable energy technologies and sustainable practices. Research and education in the field of energy will facilitate the transfer of knowledge to future generations. University of Vaasa graduates contribute to the sector by creating and implementing new knowledge, such as innovative energy solutions and sustainable practices that address current energy challenges.

A new zero-emission research environment completed in Vaasa – WSTAR offers solutions for data center energy efficiency

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/new-zero-emission-research-environment-completed-vaasa-wstar-offers-solutions-data-center-energy>

Research and Competence Center for Engine Technology in Vaasa

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/research-and-competence-center-engine-technology-vaasa>

8 Decent Work and Economic Growth

The University of Vaasa conducts research in numerous disciplines, including management and economics, on employment and economic growth. Understanding how to create working conditions and practices that respect human rights and promote the well-being of all employees is aided by research and instruction. Research and education also contribute to economic development that takes environmental and social concerns into account. Research, including the InnoLab research platform, contributes to an understanding of how to foster innovation and productivity growth, particularly by identifying best practices that enhance employee engagement and well-being in the workplace.

How to solve the remote work stalemate – dissertation offers tools for successful hybrid work

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/how-solve-remote-work-stalemate-dissertation-offers-tools-successful-hybrid-work>

Growth and competitiveness through AI and intangible capital, and a roadmap for a sustainable space economy – University of Vaasa receives funding from the Strategic Research Council

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/growth-and-competitiveness-through-ai-and-intangible-capital-and-roadmap-sustainable>

9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Innovative production processes that conserve natural resources and reduce environmental impacts can be devised across many of our disciplines and fields of study—for example, in Industrial Engineering and Management. Research is central both to devising these processes and, alongside education, to disseminating the resulting innovations and technologies—work pursued through the VEBIC, InnoLab and Digital Economy research platforms together with the InnoEco unit and Vaasa Startup Factory.

University of Vaasa involved in a research initiative on human-centred and embodied AI

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/university-vaasa-involved-research-initiative-human-centred-and-embodied-ai>

University of Vaasa involved in developing circular solutions for the European furniture industry

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/university-vaasa-involved-developing-circular-solutions-european-furniture-industry>

Over one million euros for research on AI and leadership – Aiming to support the digital transformation

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/over-one-million-euros-research-ai-and-leadership-aiming-support-digital>

10 Reduced inequalities

The University of Vaasa is dedicated to reducing global inequality. One way to accomplish this is through research and education on good governance. Another essential strategy to lessen inequities is to conduct research on equity concerns surrounding the energy transition. Communication sciences investigate concepts and terminology from a variety of domains. Concepts and terminology are necessary to structure, clarify, and enhance communication, thereby facilitating mutual understanding. Understanding is one of the necessary factors in reducing inequality.

How to improve youth well-being in school and work? Responsibility cannot be shifted solely to individuals or social services

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/articles/how-improve-youth-well-being-school-and-work-responsibility-cannot-be-shifted>

11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

One of the University of Vaasa's longest-term sustainable development projects concerns the creation of sustainable communities and cities in collaboration with various players. The university will continue to work closely with the City of Vaasa, various regional NGOs, and other stakeholders. Urban and regional development challenges are specifically addressed in research and education in regional studies and other administrative sciences, as well as industrial management and marketing studies, both of which have a long history of green development projects in the Vaasa region.

Vaasa aims to become a model city for carbon-neutral energy – University of Vaasa involved in developing solutions

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/vaasa-aims-become-model-city-carbon-neutral-energy-university-vaasa-involved-developing-solutions>

University of Vaasa conducts research on utilising buildings as energy sources

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/university-vaasa-conducts-research-utilising-buildings-energy-sources>

12 Responsible Consumption and Production

Sustainable consumption research and instruction at the University of Vaasa encourage more eco-friendly consumption practices. These include waste reduction, recycling promotion, and the selection of sustainable products. Additionally, research and education on responsible consumption contribute to a greater understanding of consumer responsibility and agency. The University of Vaasa places special emphasis on the fact that responsible consumption is a component of a larger sustainable lifestyle that also includes energy efficiency, healthy dietary habits, and environmentally friendly transportation.

Happiness is not found in fast fashion – reducing consumption improves body image and well-being

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/happiness-not-found-fast-fashion-reducing-consumption-improves-body-image-and-well>

Deceptive practices and online manipulation under scrutiny – Research Council of Finland awards nearly €590,000 to the University of Vaasa's MisLead project

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/deceptive-practices-and-online-manipulation-under-scrutiny-research-council-finland>

13 Climate Action

Research and instruction at the University of Vaasa assist individuals and organisations in making more environmentally responsible decisions, such as reducing energy consumption, selecting environmentally friendly products, and opting for public transportation. For instance, research and instruction in public management examine the significance of informed decision-making for planning and implementing climate action. Additionally, research assists in identifying vulnerable populations and ensuring that climate action is equitable and responsive to the requirements of all.

Riitta and Jorma J. Takanen Foundation Donates €120,000 to the University of Vaasa – University invests in hydrogen and battery technology research

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/riitta-and-jorma-j-takanen-foundation-donates-eu120000-university-vaasa-university-invests-hydrogen>

Recycled lubricants and pulp by-products as solutions to emission challenges in marine and off-road engines

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/recycled-lubricants-and-pulp-products-solutions-emission-challenges-marine-and-road>

Communicating climate change adaptation can evoke conflicting emotions

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/communicating-climate-change-adaptation-can-evoke-conflicting-emotions>

14 Life below water

The world's rivers, oceans, and lakes are home to an astounding array of fish, animal, and plant life, but they are under threat from human activities. Water is also important for culture and trade. The international shipping industry is responsible for the carriage of around 90% of world trade. Therefore, carbon dioxide emissions from ships must be minimised, which is a major research goal at the University of Vaasa. We also have a number of space-data-related research projects underway. Transportation and logistics, along with monitoring water quality and environmental factors, can leverage space data.

15 Life on land

The growing rate of biodiversity loss is one of humanity's most pressing issues, alongside—and inextricably tied to—climate change. To varying degrees, all human actions impact the natural environment and its biodiversity. Life on Earth is where we witness the most immediate effects. One of the instruments we employ to measure impacts is space data from Earth-orbiting satellites. The University of Vaasa is exploring the use of space data. It will help in understanding strategies for preventing and reducing emissions. It will also assist in identifying the necessary steps and monitoring their effectiveness.

16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Businesses must prioritise social and environmental sustainability to foster and maintain peace. The University of Vaasa addresses topics of peace, justice, and ethical governance in both business studies and administrative sciences. Our research on these topics takes a unique approach called comprehensive security, which incorporates the political, economic, social, and environmental factors of security.

New AI project aims to prevent cyberattacks on wireless networks

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/new-ai-project-aims-prevent-cyberattacks-wireless-networks>

Crisis management is not just the state's responsibility – the roles of citizens and the media require clearer definition

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/crisis-management-not-just-states-responsibility-roles-citizens-and-media-require>

17 Partnerships for the goals

The University of Vaasa stands out for its extensive and diverse partnership with the regional business community. For the past two decades, the Strategic Business Development research group has actively advanced the field of research in service businesses, digital service businesses, and business collaboration. The University of Vaasa's experts help businesses and other communities expand their operations through a number of projects. Our experts worked with the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia to create an innovative model for supporting regions in adopting smart specialisation policies.

University of Vaasa and Vaasa University of Applied Sciences establish a strong and competitive higher education consortium

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/university-vaasa-and-vaasa-university-applied-sciences-establish-strong-and-competitive-higher>

University of Vaasa becomes the first in Nordics to be recognised for significant regional and societal impact

<https://www.uwasa.fi/en/newshub/news/university-vaasa-becomes-first-nordics-be-recognised-significant-regional-and-societal>

Research

The University of Vaasa has built a significant critical mass in SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure) and continues to publish high-impact research in both areas. Research under SDGs 7, 8, 9, 12, and 13 sustains outstanding citation impact, reflecting a level of research excellence that aligns closely with the university's strategy and focus areas.

Our research platforms continued to drive sustainability-orientated work in 2025:

- **VEBIC (Vaasa Energy Business Innovation Center)**—focused on energy and sustainable development.
- **Digital Economy Platform** – advancing digitalisation for sustainable business models.
- **InnoLab** —centered on innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Preparedness and Resilience Research Platform (PREP)**—newly established in January 2025—focuses on economic and societal resilience.

Over the course of 2025, the university took part in a wide range of research projects: developing circular economy solutions, applying artificial intelligence in product development, preventing cyberattacks on wireless networks, and exploring the use of buildings as energy sources. Funding from the Research Council of Finland helped support studies on AI that focuses on people, how AI can work with non-physical assets to boost growth and competitiveness, a plan for a sustainable space economy, and ways to prevent online consumer fraud.

Our research collaboration with industry also deepened in 2025 through strategic partnerships with ABB, Wärtsilä, Hitachi, and Danfoss. The CoDoc (Company Doctoral) collaboration model was expanded, integrating the research interests of companies and organisations into doctoral students' research topics and making doctoral education both more flexible and more industry-relevant.

Education

The university's strategic goals of attracting more students—particularly international students—and of expanding the volume of education, research, and funding continue to drive growth. In 2025, around 1,500 students graduated from the University of Vaasa with bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees, ready to apply their knowledge and skills to sustainable development throughout their future careers.

The university also reached a record number of applicants in the spring joint application round, receiving 8,007 applications for bachelor's programmes—a 9.3% increase from 2024.

The University of Vaasa's curriculum and degree programmes reflect a set of cross-cutting themes: ethics, responsibility, sustainability, an international outlook, and a sense of community. In line with these principles, all our bachelor's and specialised master's degrees include themes and learning outcomes rooted in sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. This focus is visible both in specific programmes and course titles as well as individual course descriptions.

Several of our programmes refer directly to sustainable development—for example, the Master's Programme in International Business: Sustainable Global Business and the Erasmus Mundus Master's in Smart Cities and Communities. The learning outcomes of our bachelor's capstone course likewise feature sustainability and ethics as central themes. We have also introduced profiling studies in the form of multidisciplinary study modules with a strong sustainability focus, designed to bring together expertise from business, technology, and the social sciences.

As a member of the Green Skills Vaasa Network, we complement our SDG-related academic curricula with more vocationally oriented training, courses, and challenges. In 2025, the network continued to develop the Sustainability Day concept, bringing together visiting scholars from fellow PRME universities to share best practices in sustainability education.

The University of Vaasa also offers students many opportunities to engage with university and school leadership and to take part in the administrative bodies that shape the development of education. The rectorate and deans meet regularly with the student union and student associations, and the Student Forum—chaired by the vice-rector for education—brings the student union, student associations, university management, and student services together for ongoing dialogue.



Positive impact

Our commitment to sustainability runs deep. We work to integrate the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainability into every aspect of what we do. As a valued partner within Northern Europe's largest energy and environment business cluster, we contribute to affordable and clean energy, economic growth, industrial innovation, and responsible consumption and production.

Although measuring our “handprint” is inherently difficult, there is every reason to believe that the University of Vaasa is making a meaningful positive impact. We respond to global challenges through innovative, high-quality research and education, and we support the sustainable development of learners, partners, ecosystems, and wider society—both regionally and globally.

A major accomplishment in 2025 was the completion of the WSTAR (Wasa Zero Emission Data Centre) research environment in October. This joint research infrastructure, developed together with Novia University of Applied Sciences, Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK), and Åbo Akademi University, represents a €1.9 million investment funded by the Research Council of Finland and NextGenerationEU. WSTAR focuses on developing solutions that improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions in data centers—a rapidly expanding sector with considerable climate implications. The facility combines air- and liquid-cooled servers with cooling systems optimised for maximum waste heat reuse, underscoring our commitment to advancing zero-emission technologies.



Recognition and Impact in 2025

The university's positive impact received significant recognition throughout 2025. In April, President of the Republic of Finland Alexander Stubb visited the University of Vaasa, delivered a lecture at a ceremonial event, and was awarded an honorary doctorate. Jacob Wallenberg, chair of the board of Investor AB, also received the insignia of his honorary doctorate during the autumn 2025 conferment ceremony.

The university earned international recognition for its substantial economic, societal, and regional impact—becoming the first institution in the Nordic countries to receive this distinction. The Business School Impact System (BSIS) evaluation report highlighted the university's central role in regional development and its strong standing as part of the EnergyVaasa network, the largest energy technology cluster in the Nordic region.

The University of Vaasa also maintained its place among the world's top 500 universities and ranked among the best in Finland for research quality in business and engineering. In addition, it retained the top position in the Finnish universities' performance ranking.

Energy and Sustainability Leadership

In 2025, the University of Vaasa continued to play a leading role in energy transition research and education. EnergyWeek—the most important international energy event in the Nordic countries—brought together researchers, decision-makers, and other influential voices to explore innovative energy solutions and strengthen collaboration between universities and businesses. In August, the university's multidisciplinary programme at the Wasa Future Festival sparked lively discussions, deepened partnerships, and challenged participants to develop shared solutions to global challenges.

The university also raised its profile at the EU level, particularly through its participation in conferences in Brussels in January and November. These engagements underscored the role of research in driving the energy transition, advancing sustainable growth, and strengthening crisis resilience.

Climate Leadership Coalition Membership

The University of Vaasa is a member of the Climate Leadership Coalition (CLC), whose thematic groups are the main channels through which members come together for practical activities. As an accredited CLC member, the University of Vaasa is also able to take part in the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This gives us an additional global platform from which to influence governments, businesses, NGOs, and citizens on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Formal Commitments to Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability

The University of Vaasa adheres to various international and national frameworks that direct our sustainability efforts.

- **Theses on Sustainable Development and Responsibility (UNIFI, 2020, 2025).** All Finnish universities, including the University of Vaasa, carry out joint systemic follow-up and coordinate shared steps for implementing the European sustainability competence framework (GreenComp, 2022).
- **PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education).** Joined in 2020 as a demonstration of our international commitment to advancing sustainability, responsibility, and ethics in education, research, and leadership. We actively participate in the PRME Nordic Chapter.
- **Global Business School Network (GBSN).** Joined as a natural extension of our PRME membership, helping to strengthen the role of management education in addressing society's development needs, particularly in promoting sustainable practices and ethical leadership among future business leaders.
- **SDG Accord.** Signed in 2021, it joins a global network of universities, research institutes, and other educational organisations working to strengthen education's contribution to the SDGs.

We guide our work on ethics, responsibility, and sustainability through the following commitment documents:

- The University of Vaasa Strategy 2030 focuses on sustainable business, energy, and society.
- University of Vaasa Code of Conduct (approved by the University Board, 2021)
- PRME Sharing Information on Progress Reports (2022, 2024, and 2025)
- University of Vaasa HRS4R Action Plan 2022–2024
- The Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity and Procedures for Handling Alleged Violations of Research Integrity in Finland (2023)

- The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2023)
- University of Vaasa Equality Plan 2024
- University of Vaasa Accessibility Plan 2025
- San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA, 2022)
- The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA, 2022)

We actively promote equality and well-being on campus and in the larger community based on these core values. We ensure that our mission and objectives reflect the voice and expertise of the entire community by representing faculty, staff, and students in all decision-making bodies. Gender equality and the integration of international staff and students into university life remain essential to our social sustainability goals.

Conclusion

The year 2025 marked significant progress on the University of Vaasa's sustainability journey. A record number of student applications, major infrastructure achievements—including the completion of WSTAR and the launch of the Preparedness and Resilience Research Platform—and our best-ever performance in the THE Impact Rankings together show that growth and sustainability can move forward hand in hand.

As we continue toward our 2030 carbon neutrality goal, we remain committed to innovation, collaboration, and leadership as the university at the heart of the Nordic energy capital. Our expanded research platforms, strengthened industry partnerships, and deeper engagement with the UN Sustainable Development Goals put us in a strong position to make meaningful contributions to global sustainability challenges, while continuing to serve our regional community and our international network of students, researchers, and partners.

The groundwork laid in 2025—new research infrastructure, expanded educational offerings, and growing international recognition—provides a solid foundation for accelerating our sustainability impact in the years ahead.