

## **SDG 12 Cluster of IAU International Association of Universities**

### **Sustainable procurement management at the University of Vechta**

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When procuring materials, products and services, the University of Vechta is increasingly considering environmental, social and ethical aspects as important decision criteria. Products and services purchased from the University of Vechta are environmentally and socially compatible, low-waste, recycled or recyclable, made from renewable raw materials, energy-efficient, climate-neutral, fair traded, regional and or organic produced, and responsible transported.

Sustainability-related requirements are also placed on the manufacturing process and the life cycle of the products (production and supply chain).

Even if the University of Vechta has to compare conventional with sustainable products and services for economic reasons, the latter may initially be more expensive than the former, but the more sustainability performance can justify the additional costs in the initial purchase. In the use phase, the consumption costs of sustainable products are often lower, as savings potential e.g. of energy, waste and consumables. The longevity of sustainable, high-quality materials can also extend the use phase, which also reduces costs.

#### **1. Sustainable procurement management needs a whole institution approach**

In order to organize the processes of sustainable development at the University of Vechta in a structured manner and to design them with the participation of interested parties, the working group "Sustainable University" was established in 2015. The working group can be seen as a catalyst for sustainable development at the University of Vechta. It is deliberately managed as an open and cross-status working group with the aim of creating a participatory work culture in which both employees and students can contribute their ideas and suggestions.

The University of Vechta strives for an environmentally friendly, resource-efficient, family and gender-fair, inclusive, health-promoting and diverse campus operation.

## 2. Sustainable procurement management requires cooperation, networking and competition

The University of Vechta sees further networking and cooperation with relevant regional and national actors, service providers and producers as essential for sustainable development. The university therefore endeavors to establish sustainability monitoring for itself and its region.

The University of Vechta is also a co-founder and active partner of the Hoch-N network. HOCH-N is a research project as well as a networking platform dedicated to sustainable development processes at Higher Education Institutions (HEI). HOCHN is funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). HOCHN aims at promoting sustainable development in HEI according to the whole institution approach. Eleven universities are collaborating in the research project and 137 universities are member of the network.

The following figure gives an overview about the findings of the research on procurement showing the barrier and driving-forces.

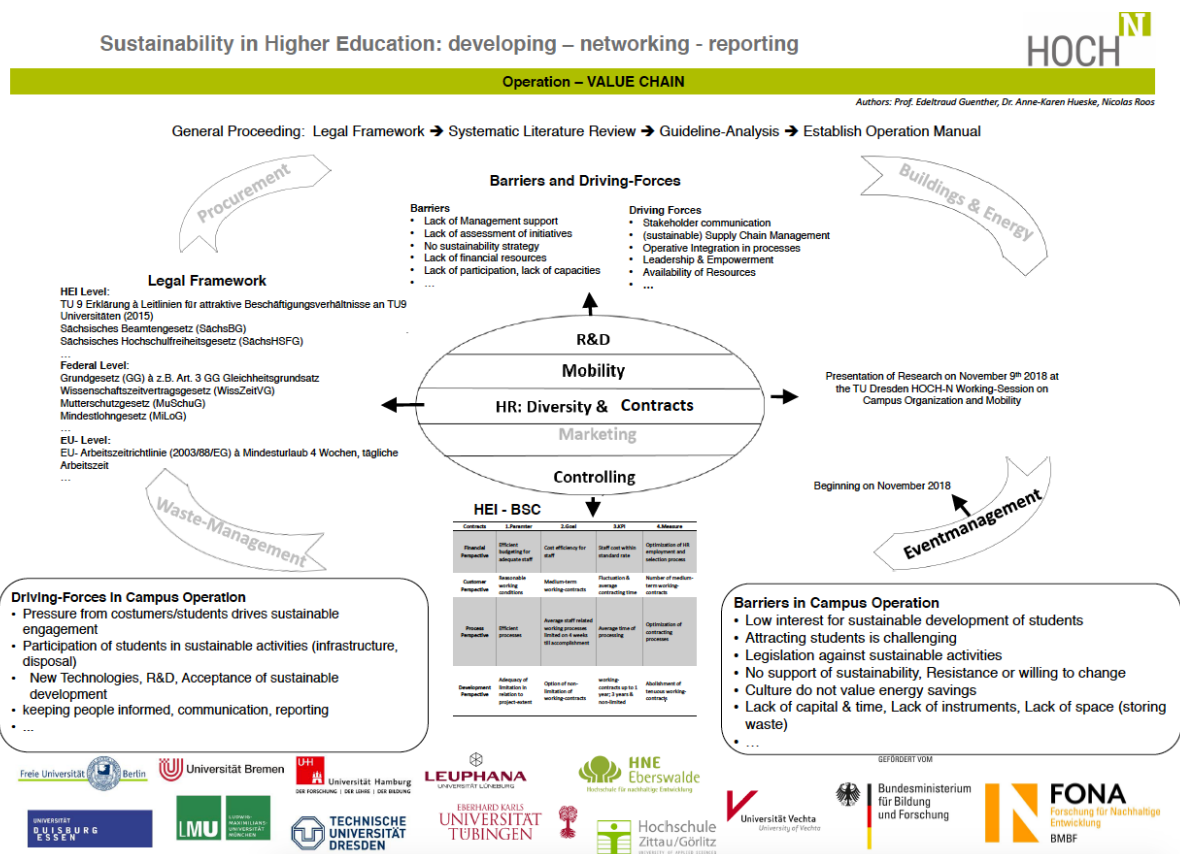


Figure 1: Value chain – Hoch-N 2018

When procuring products and services, the university pays attention to quality labels that document sustainability and sustainable production. The University of Vechta also takes part in competitions to showcase their strategies on responsible production and consumption and to have its sustainability activities certified.

For example, the university is applying as a fair-trade-university. In order to be awarded the Fairtrade University, a university must demonstrably meet various criteria relating to its commitment to fair trade at various levels. This means that the university only uses fair trade products for regular meetings and public events. A fair-trade-university mainly uses fair trade products in its shops, canteens and restaurants. In addition, the university regularly organizes Fairtrade events.

### 3. RPC at University of Vechta in concrete



The label "Procure greener - recycling-paper-friendly university" stands for environmentally friendly and resource-efficient action in everyday life.

For many years, the university has decided to use recycled paper (e.g. with the Blue Angel). All commissioned prints are made with environmental paper.

In 2015, the University of Vechta awarded the Pro Recycling Paper (IPR) initiative, a cooperation with the competence center for sustainable procurement of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Environment Agency. Since 2016 she has been a successful participant in the competition organized by the IPR, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, the Federal Environment Agency and the German University Association.

To reduce paper requirements in general, double-sided printing was introduced as a default on the printer drivers at the end of 2019 when the leased multifunction devices were replaced.

In addition to printing (print area-copy area), there is also the external assignment of print jobs (brochures, etc.). We use here among others IGEPA Group paper to: Circle silk, Premium White, Circle matt White, Circle offset Premium White, Circle offset White. All papers mentioned here are classified as environmental papers.

Uni Vechta prefers the electronic transmission of information material over conventional mail. In this way, the material from providers can be easily forwarded to other members of the university and the archiving of your documents is made easier. In the interest of environmental protection, less paper is used.

**In the area of office supplies**, we also started to buy environmentally friendly individual products. At the end of 2013, 38 new Kyocera multifunction devices for printing, copying and scanning were leased through IBS. The toners used in it are CO<sub>2</sub>-neutral: The supplier Kyocera offsets the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that arise

during raw material generation, production, packaging, transport and recycling of the toner in a separate climate protection project in Kenya. For the period from June 2014 to May 2015, 1.58 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> were compensated for the University of Vechta.

In the toner area, we also pay attention to sustainability. For this reason, we decided on the WTA toner, which is awarded annually through framework contracts. The following should be emphasized with this toner:

1) Improving the carbon footprint

- CO<sub>2</sub> neutral toner
- 100% climate-neutral shipping
- Reduction of waste through recycling
- Production awarded the NordicSwan environmental certificate
- Fulfillment of the Electronic Equipment Act - free empties disposal
- Fulfillment of the Packaging Act - comprehensive packaging recycling

2) Social engagement

- Jobs in Germany
- Fair and real wages
- Continued payment of wages in the event of illness
- Safe work environment for people and the environment
- Creation of training places
- No Child labour

3) Price advantage

The average price advantage over the original products is 60%. The WTA toner is:

- Made in Germany
- Qualitative German engineering work
- ISO-9001 and ISO-14001 certified production
- Mileage according to ISO-19752 and ISO-19798
- Manufactured according to DIN-33870-1 and DIN-33870-2
- All criteria of document authenticity are met
- pollutant tested toner powder
- We have a 3-year warranty on all climate toners

**Green IT:** The new IT devices used at the university, such as PCs and monitors, are also examples of "Green IT". Since 2011, the university has been using so-called "mini PCs" for computer workstations. The laptop technology used in it - just like the TFT monitors used at the University of Vechta - is certified with the EU Energy Star 6.0 and thus has a significantly lower power requirement than conventional desktop PCs. Basically, energy efficiency is an important decision criterion for IT tenders. The devices have a minimum useful life of five years and are used professionally after use by external service providers.

At the end of 2019, 38 new Kyocera multifunction devices for printing, copying and scanning were leased through IBS. The toners used in it are CO<sub>2</sub> neutral and certified by "myClimate": The supplier Kyocera compensates for the amount of CO<sub>2</sub>

emissions that arise during raw material generation, production, packaging, transport and recycling of the toner in a separate climate protection project in Kenya.

Since May 2013, KYOCERA Document Solutions, in cooperation with the climate protection organization myclimate, has been supporting the work of the Tembea project in the Kenyan Siaya region. The aim is to spread efficient household stoves. This not only protects the local wood deposits, but also improves the living conditions of the local people.

For the period from June 2016 to May 2017, 2.15 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> were compensated for the University of Vechta. When installing the devices, it is also avoided to place them in office rooms so that there is no pollution of the room air with fine dust and ozone, which could affect the health of the employees.

**Resource conservation through digitization:** The working group "Digitization in Teaching" deals with the introduction and wide use of digital tools in teaching. This supports the efforts to increasingly use eLearning tools in synchronous and asynchronous teaching, so that students and teachers can also take courses from home and thus avoid emissions for trips to and from the university. The same applies to various IT tools that also enable you to work from home in your home office, such as various cloud solutions for data exchange and for collaborative processing of documents, or tools for accessing special software such as SAP or HIS products. Another component is a dedicated web conference system (BigBlueButton) for virtual lessons, conferences, committee meetings or work meetings. All of these tools proved their worth during the corona pandemic and enabled largely virtual university operations. Even from sustainability considerations, these tools should continue to be used where they can be used meaningfully and should complement the presence even after the crisis has been successfully overcome.

Digitization is also being pushed forward in the library of the University of Vechta. Eight supervisory scanners for students and employees have been available there since 2013. Their simple, quick and free use and the flawless scan results create an incentive for users to do without unnecessary printed copies. And the offer was well received: In the first six years, 1.5 million digital copies had already been made by the supervisory scanner.

**In the hygiene area:** Toilet paper and towel paper has also been purchased and used in an environmentally friendly manner for many years.

**Catering:** Our caterers buy and use, wherever possible, organic products, seasonal produce, and food sold under the Fair-Trade-label. They pay close attention to where our products come from and the conditions under which they were produced.

**Mobility:** With the support of the Oldenburgische Landesbank AG (OLB), the University of Vechta has now been able to purchase its first e-bike, which is to be the prelude to an e-fleet.

With over 5,300 students and around 500 employees at seven locations in the city area, the University of Vechta contributes to the burden on the infrastructure. In the spirit of sustainable development, we want to focus more on electromobility in the future in order to reduce short trips by car that are questionable in terms of transport and environmental policy.

**Waste avoidance and resource conservation:** Through several student projects and initiatives at the University of Vechta, the university members are working towards a more conscious use of food and other consumer goods and resources.

Students run a café where they serve fair trade and ecologically grown coffee and tea as well as little snacks they produce. The furniture are second hand and the service are run by the students on a voluntary basis. Within that student café there is a fridge, where members of university can put in things to eat that were bought and are no longer needed as well as fresh fruit and vegetable from their balconies or gardens. The fridges as well as the café are frequented to a high extent, as the things served are not only fresh, fair and ecological grown but also much cheaper than conventional food or the conventionally run cafés around the university.

Together with students members of the training staff also dwelled two little gardens behind the university as well as gardens nearby the university and harvested and cooked together as well as filled the fridge with fruit and vegetable again. Within that urban gardening project a special focus was led on intercultural groups with students from highly different partner universities, who bring in highly interesting experiences from around the world.

There is also an exchange cabinet that works on the same principle, but is intended for things like clothing, decorative items or books.

In order to give students and staff at the University of Vechta direct access to regional fruit and vegetables from organic cultivation, students have established a close cooperation with a nearby farm and organize a central collection point for the weekly fruit and vegetable delivery from the farm on campus, which follows the principles of solidarity agriculture (Solawi).

The Vechta local group of the association “Viva con Agua” campaigns at the University of Vechta through various campaigns for economical water consumption and collects donations that benefit the association’s projects in countries of the global south.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There is still a lot of to do. Attention should be paid to these aspects

- Changes in procurement processes only in cooperation with the administration and regional actors
- It is important to provide as much information as possible, to appreciate the information needs of the procurer
- Necessary are decisions and support of top management for change processes and implementation of action routines
- Procurement processes should be seen as dynamic, because requirements and offers change,
- Process-accompanying information are needed. Use of various media and channels (website, info-email, university magazine, staff meeting, service consultancy, training events, ...)
- Quality seals and competitions are helpful to keep the procurement processes going on.
- Sustainable procurement must be part of everyday life. That is why all groups of people at the university have to be involved

Sustainable procurement management is an ESD project as well. Universities should therefore use the incredible potential and motivation of students.

*Thank you to Monika Schürmann (Head of the Procurement Office) for providing us with so much helpful information.*

To find out more about Sustainable Development at the University of Vechta, follow the link here:  
<https://www.uni-vechta.de/en/sustainable-university/>