



Greener Mobility best practices: Let's get inspired!

“Sustainability” is on everyone’s lips: public authorities, National Agencies (NA) and Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are increasingly confronted with the need to make the campus more sustainable – in particular by reducing CO₂ emissions – but at the same time to implement the goals of an internationalisation strategy aimed at promoting more mobility. On the eve of a new generation of European programmes, it is the perfect time to reflect upon and discuss concrete actions to design and implement greener programmes. The efforts to design and implement greener programmes should not, however, overshadow other important factors such as inclusion and equal opportunities or economic efficiency: a balance should be maintained.

Several initiatives have already been launched in Europe and Switzerland and can be given as examples of best practices.

Greener mobility initiatives address different categories of players and tackle different levels:

1. Policy level: How to design greener mobility and cooperation programmes
2. Higher Education Institutions (HEI): How to implement greener mobility and cooperation programmes
3. Mobility grant beneficiaries: How to contribute?

1. How to design greener mobility and cooperation programmes?

Programme design and management

Mobility programmes are designed in such a way that sustainable means of transport can be preferred for the outward and return journey.

Which measures could promise success? Here are some examples of how sustainable mobility could be promoted. Almost all proposals imply additional programme funding.

- a. Train grants: whoever chooses to travel by train is entitled to an additional grant to cover the often higher costs of train journeys or at least the difference between a flight and a train ticket.
- b. A list of green destinations from each home-country institution is published according to the calculation of CO₂ emissions and the travel duration. For these destinations flying is not an option anymore if they want to be eligible for a mobility grant (e.g.: Geneva – Paris or Zurich – Munich). This option is linked with the train grants in order to cover higher travel costs.
- c. A green call: specific funding instruments for institutions to promote green activities with regard to cooperation and mobility.
- d. The SEMP/Erasmus charter is adapted to include the promotion of green mobility.
- e. In particular for staff mobility: the possibility of receiving a grant for an additional travel day should be given in the event of longer trips.
- f. In particular for student mobility: students should consider green mobility during their studies (for example they should be encouraged to stay at their country destination for the complete duration of their studies and not return home without good reason).

Awareness

The NA acts as a promoter of greener mobility and cooperation programmes and of eco-responsible mobility initiatives.

- a. The theme of greener mobility is addressed at events organised by the NA.
- b. “Greener Mobility Kit”: NA offers a special tool kit to help International Relations Offices (IROs) to promote more sustainable activities. This kit is composed of:
 - one discussion session on site with the IRO team;
 - promotional materials (online flyers/infographics, prepared posts for social media to motivate students and staff to choose greener options for travel, posters to hang in the HEI);
 - questions for discussions in group settings, list of arguments;
 - Q&A to answer questions from students and staff or to dispel potential skepticism within the IRO.

Knowledge and information/tracking

The NA has an overview of greener mobility initiatives carried out within higher education institutions in its respective country.

- a. Good practices in the field of greener mobility are shared on the NA’s webpage. Concrete ideas coming from inside or from beyond the home country’s borders are published.
- b. NA documents which means of travel are chosen by the mobile programme participants (carbon tracking).

Lobbying

The NA raises political awareness of environmental issues related to mobility.

- a. Partnerships are established, such as a European (and Swiss) agreement between the national railway companies to offer a discount to students travelling with the train.



Level 1
Policy level

2. What can Higher Education Institutions do?

In Switzerland, according to the information collected, 53%¹ of the HEI (participating to the SEMP) have developed a strategy, some principles or a commission for sustainability, including 29%² of these HEI that have written special rules for business/professional trips such as limitations on flying when other options can be considered, or with a special tax on plane tickets. Furthermore additional HEI are currently planning such measures to avoid flights.

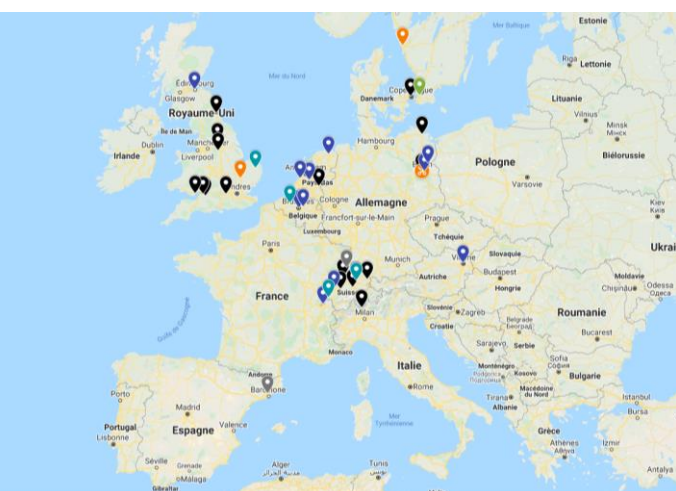
According to discussions with Swiss IROs during a workshop that was organised especially on the topic of greener mobility, some agreements on potential measures are being shared:

- Information to increase awareness
- Financial support
- Flight restrictions (on certain destinations) for the staff/professors should be imposed;
- Need for special funding instruments to develop projects in sustainability on the campus;
- Value of travelling is to be reconsidered (for example with extra working days for staff who travel far away by train).

Special policies on air travel around the world

A map “Academic Air Travel Reduction and Offsetting Projects” created by Agnes Kreil, PhD Student at ETH Zurich, shows the different projects in progress in Europe and beyond. Switzerland stands out with numerous initiatives and projects.

 [See the map](#)



¹ 21 HEI out of 40 HEI















² 6 HEI out of 21 HEI



Level 2
Institutional level

Overview of concrete examples within Swiss HEI



In Switzerland several HEI launched initiatives to reduce CO₂ emissions from air travel. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the most successful projects in Swiss HEI.

Institution	Greener mobility initiative	Link
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich – ETH	ETH Zurich's Air Travel Project and flight tracking ETH Zurich executive board launched a flight reduction project in 2017 (<i>stay grounded keep connected</i>) where in a participatory approach all departments, the Executive Board and administrative units committed themselves to reducing flight emissions by an average of 11% ³ from 2019-2025. A new monitoring system measure emissions more accurately, listing flight number, class and date.	 «Stay grounded, keep connected»  @FlylessETH  Reduction targets and corresponding measures  Reasons for flights and potential measures
University of Geneva	Air travel policy with restriction on certain destinations Policy on business travel by air with a clear objective: to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030. Without justification, the use of air travel is not allowed for destinations reachable in 4 hours or less by train from Geneva. Compensation for any flight is the rule at UNIGE.	 UNIGE Air travel policy  Policy governing business travels by air
University of Neuchâtel	Levy a sustainability tax on all air travel This contribution is levied on each flight taken. It goes into a fund intended to finance the usual activities for the promotion of sustainable development at the University of Neuchâtel, as well as sustainable projects contributing to the reduction of local greenhouse gas emissions.	 « Développement durable » (FR)  Directive concernant le prélèvement (FR)
Zurich University of the Arts	Development of an air travel policy based on the UN's 17 SDGs The focus in 2018 was on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from air travel, as these account for approx. 50% of the greenhouse gas balance of the ZHdK. A survey was conducted in 2018 among ZHdK employees as part of the process of planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from air travel: 87% can imagine flying less within the scope of their activities at the ZHdK.	 Sustainability Strategy
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne - EPFL	Rising awareness via training, guidelines and exhibition With their project "Travel Less Without Loss" EPFL wants to identify ways and propose tools to reduce CO ₂ emissions. Train tickets with discount are also available.	 Travel Less Without Loss  Guidelines  Exhibition posters
University of Basel	Strategy to reduce air travel The UNIBAS has been working on an implementation strategy to reduce air travel since January 2020. This will include improved data collection and potential reduction targets and measures.	 "Air Travel"  Sustainability Report - Mobility

³ The cut in emissions is based on the effective reduction; it neither includes compensation nor the efficiency gains of the airlines due to technological progress. If these efficiency gains of airlines were not subtracted, ETH Zurich's reduction of emissions would amount to about 22%. In addition, the majority of departments will offset their flights.

Concrete examples in European Higher Education Institutions

Below are two European projects introducing policies to reduce CO2 emissions from air travel.

Institution	Greener mobility initiative	Link
Uppsala University	Pilot project for greener student mobility In the year of 2019, 50 “OUT-Mobilities” were chosen to receive a special “Train Grant” of EUR 190. In 2020 the pilot project was renewed with 100 students.	 Exchange students encouraged to take the train
Ghent University	Strict rules with a list of green destinations Policy on business travel by air with a clear objective: to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030.	 Sustainable travel policy

What else?

UN's 17 SDGs: contribution of International Relations Offices (IRO)

A very complete document called “Sustainable development goals: How can French higher education and research institutions contribute?” has been written with a list of all the sustainable initiatives that can be applied within the higher education professions, including the IRO. International mobility is pointed out with green actions such as promoting trains and levying taxes on flights.

 [Read the document \(p.122-129\)](#)


Offsetting option

Carbon offsetting consists of trying to compensate for emissions from CO₂ by financing projects that reduce footprint carbon. Here are some organisations that offer such a service:

- [Atmosfair](#)
- [CO₂Logic](#)
- [My Climate](#)

Virtual conference tools

Each HEI should offer a professional tool and technical support to organise virtual meetings or conferences.

 [Tools list](#) (in German, in French and in Italian)

Sulitest

Sulitest was initially designed by the **Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI)** to test and improve sustainability literacy of citizens and organisations. Everyone can help higher education institutions to develop awareness and knowledge about sustainability on the campus.

 [See the website](#)

International Sustainable Campus Network

The mission of the ISCN is to provide an international forum to support higher education institutions in the exchange of information, ideas, and best practices for achieving sustainable campus operations and integrating sustainability into research and teaching.

 [List of higher education institution members](#)

Flying less in academia: a resource guide

This Resource Guide, first published in the spring of 2019, aims to serve as a FREE, OPEN-ACCESS repository of all resources related to the “Flying Less in Academia” movement.

 [See the website](#)

3. Mobility grant beneficiaries

Mobility grant beneficiaries can contribute to promote greener mobility. There are various options available.

As staff

- a. Sharing good experiences of greener mobility via the internal and external communication tools (newsletter, intranet, social media).
- b. Asking/encouraging hierarchy to develop a greener travel policy (if not already in place).
- c. Taking the train as much as possible to be an example.
- d. Organising “working trip” on the train. [Example: SILVIVA Foundation](#)
- e. Thinking about the destination in terms of greener mobility
 - Can I take a train to reach my destination?
[See the map of the Swiss federal train company](#)
 - If the destination is too far, can I take a direct flight?
 - If I travel by air, can I offset my CO₂ emissions?



Level 3
Individual level

Something to think about

The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne conducted a study on the potential correlation between academic performance and CO₂ footprint of business air travel within its institution. The result is pretty clear; there is no significant correlation between scientific impact and CO₂ footprint from air travel for senior EPFL researchers [[source](#)].

As a student

- a. Asking for information to achieve more eco-responsible mobility. The International Relations Office should be contacted to know about potential grants to support travel by train.
- b. Encouraging other students via [Erasmus Student Network ESN](#), which is part of the [Generation Climate Europe \(GCE\) coalition](#).
- c. Travelling by train with other students doing a mobility abroad.
- d. Considering the train as a very positive way to reach a mobility destination (luggage transport service is also an option to make the travel more comfortable)
 - [Rail.cc](#): an independent blog and forum on booking train travel around the world
 - Platform [omio](#) to find the best train connexions across the top 30 destinations in Europe
 - Comparison of travel on the platform [energie-environnement.ch](#) (FR/DE)
- e. Providing good reviews about good experiences in terms of greener mobility via social media or blogs
 - Via [#GreenErasmus](#) or [#trainbrag](#) (pride to take train) on social media
 - Example: student trip by train to Hong Kong from Uppsala University (Sweden)
- f. Thinking about making their mobility as eco-responsible as possible on site (food, transport, energy consumption, green actions with an association).
Example: [Factsheet “Sustainable Travel to Zurich”](#) from the University of Zurich

About Movetia

Movetia is the national agency for the promotion of exchange, mobility and cooperation in all education sectors – in Switzerland, Europe and worldwide.

Mandated by the Swiss Confederation and the Cantons, Movetia encourages and supports projects in school education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education and extracurricular youth work.

 [movetia.ch](https://www.movetia.ch)