

University of Applied Sciences

Sustainability Report 2025



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Foreword

This is the first sustainability report from the Saarland University of Applied Sciences (htw saar). Our goal is to present our activities, goals, and progress in the field of sustainability transparently—for students, staff, partners, and the broader community.

We take a holistic view of sustainability across ecological, economic, and social dimensions. Guided by the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we aim to demonstrate how our university actively contributes to the global sustainability agenda.

This report highlights how we integrate sustainability into research, teaching, administration, and campus life; the initiatives we support and the structures we are establishing to build a sustainable university.

The report is not only a review of the past but also a guide for the future—a statement reflecting our responsibility toward people, the environment, and society.

The Sustainability Report is intended for both internal and external readers and documents the diversity and scope of the htw saar's commitment to social and environmental sustainability. As such, it complements the established Annual Report, which focuses primarily on performance indicators such as student and graduate numbers, external funding, resources utilized, and other financial metrics.

For us, sustainable practices are not just “nice-to-have”; they are clearly defined in the Saarland Higher Education Act (SHSG) as a mandate for the state's public universities:

“In carrying out their duties, universities are committed to the principles of sustainable development. They contribute [...] to the preservation and improvement of human living conditions and the environment, and work in particular toward the responsible use of resources.”

(Section 3(1) SHSG)

This report is organized in accordance with the structure proposed in the German Sustainability Code for Higher Education Institutions, which divides activities into governance, studies and teaching, research and knowledge transfer, and operations, with a separate section devoted to “social sustainability”.

Since 2024, sustainability has gained greater prominence through its explicit inclusion in one of the four executive board departments, with the responsible vice president taking on a coordinating and driving role. It goes without saying, however, that a holistic understanding of sustainability does not end at departmental boundaries. Cross-departmental collaboration is crucial for significant progress.

We hope you enjoy reading the report and look forward to your feedback and ideas on how we can shape the future of sustainability at the htw saar together.



The htw saar Executive Board:

Prof. Dr. Thomas Bousonville

Vice President for Student Affairs, International Affairs and Sustainability

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dieter Leonhard

President of the htw saar

Prof. Dr. Charis Förster

Vice President for Research, Knowledge and Technology Transfer

Georg Maringer

Vice President for Administration and Business Management



Alt-Saarbrücken Campus



Rotenbühl Campus

Energy, water,
community,
society



Göttelborn Campus



HTZ

The htw saar

4 locations, 3 in Saarbrücken (Alt-Saarbrücken campus, Rotenbühl campus, The University Technology Center) and Göttelborn campus

- 40,219 m² of usable space
- Approx. 6,000 students

4 faculties

- School of Architecture and Civil Engineering
- School of Engineering
- School of Social Sciences
- Business School

- 38 bachelor's degree programs
- 29 master's degree programs
- 12 Franco-German degree programs in cooperation with the Université de Lorraine, France (Franco-German University Institute (DFHI))
- 8 continuing education programs offered by the Continuing Education Center (CEC Saar)
- 5 dual bachelor's degree programs at the Akademie der Saarländischen Wirtschaft (ASW)
- Approximately 15 million euros in external funding per year

Number of employees as of January 1, 2026

- In total: 659
- Professors: 121
- Research assistants (including assistant professors), instructors for special assignments: 239
- Technical and administrative staff: 289
- Trainees: 7
- Interns: 3

Institutional Foundation

Sustainability issues have been a focus at the htw saar long before it was explicitly incorporated into a vice president's portfolio. The Fairtrade Initiative was founded as early as 2015, and its activities led to the university's certification as the 14th Fairtrade University in 2017. Starting in 2018, the "Sustainability Roundtable"—an open group for university students—discussed ideas and potential projects and presented them to the president.

A key step forward and an essential prerequisite for the structured continuation of these activities was the inclusion of "sustainability" in the title of the office of the new Vice President for Academic Affairs, International Relations, and Sustainability in 2024. This gave the topic increased visibility and significance. Subsequently, through reallocation, a half-time position for a Sustainability Officer was created, along with two temporary half-time positions for sustainability communication and greenhouse gas (GHG) accounting. This was followed by a workshop involving all departments and staff groups to determine topics and priorities.

The priorities for 2025 and 2026 included sustainability reporting—including greenhouse gas accounting—the development of a sustainable mobility strategy, and the integration of sustainability topics into the curriculum. In 2025, the htw saar joined the German Society for Sustainability at Universities (DGHochN), establishing connections with initiatives and stakeholders at universities nationwide. To date, there has been no structured involvement of the student body in the development and implementation of sustainability measures. However, with the establishment of a dedicated division within the newly elected ASStA and the agreement to hold regular meetings, this gap will be filled in the course of 2026.

Sustainability at the htw saar—from the beginning to the present day





Academic Studies and Teaching

According to our mission statement we “empower students to act sustainably and take responsibility in society. We resolve conflicts arising from differing approaches and goals through open, respectful, and constructive dialogue.”

Sustainability in teaching means designing content, methods, and structures so that students are empowered to identify complex problems, reflect on them critically, and independently develop solutions for a sustainable society. This multifaceted process operates on various levels, making it difficult to measure. On the one hand, quantitative indicators can be used, such as the number of courses related to sustainability or student projects, term papers, and theses on this topic. On the other hand, qualitative methods are needed, for example through curriculum workshops, to assess how deeply sustainability is actually integrated into teaching processes.



This highlights a key challenge: sustainability is not a clearly defined discipline, but rather a multidisciplinary topic that depends heavily on the commitment of faculty members. Academic freedom in research and teaching also means that researchers and educators are responsible for determining their own motivation, choosing their own methods, and setting their own research priorities. At the same time, institutional integration is becoming increasingly important. When sustainability is explicitly identified as a cornerstone in faculty strategies or in the teaching mission statement, it creates a framework that supports individual initiatives and provides guidance.

On the following pages, we examine this diversity using four perspectives as examples: at the School of Social Sciences, the social dimension of sustainability—including inclusion, health, and participation—is systematically and effectively integrated into teaching through courses and practical projects. The name of the bachelor's program Renewable Energies/Energy System Technology already reflects this commitment to sustainability. It combines a strong engineering foundation with a focus on renewable energy systems, making it a forward-looking extension of traditional engineering education. Comprehensive interdisciplinary modules, such as those in the field of architecture, demonstrate how sustainability functions as a multidisciplinary task by integrating ecological, economic, technical, and social factors. Finally, collaborations with external partners—such as the module with the “Forum for Responsibility” foundation—show how sustainability comes to life through lecture series and workshops that draw inspiration from academia, politics, and civil society.



Beyond these examples, the curriculum consistently addresses the requirements of sustainable development. Creating an objectively comparable framework for measurement remains a challenge.

However, the university's course database already provides a basis for collecting and analyzing relevant data for evaluation and accreditation processes. This work is currently being advanced through the implementation of an academic scorecard at the htw saar, with results expected in 2026.



Focusing on the Social Dimension of Sustainability

The School of Social Sciences explicitly focuses on the social dimension of sustainability and, through its teaching, makes a significant contribution to sustainable development. In degree programs offered by the Departments of Social Work and Early Childhood Education, as well as Health and Nursing, students acquire the skills to promote social participation, reduce inequalities, and ensure quality of life in the long term within a changing society. Practical projects in municipalities, institutions, and organizations bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world contexts, and help develop the ability to address social and health challenges in a responsible and solution-oriented manner. Interdisciplinary course content teaches methods for analyzing complex problems and developing viable strategies that promote equity, inclusion, and resilience. In addition, the faculty fosters an awareness of intercultural and international issues and enhances students' ability to address migration and diversity. The 2025 Study Day, themed "Participation-Oriented Welcome Culture," is a prime example of how the htw saar is actively contributing to the United Nations' global sustainability goals.



"The School of Social Sciences empowers students to recognize social interconnections, assume social responsibility, and develop innovative solutions to social, political, and cultural challenges."

Prof. Dr. Ulrike Zöller

Professorship for Theory, Methodology and Empirical Research



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/sowi

Degree Program in “Renewable Energies/Energy System Technology”

The interdisciplinary bachelor's program in “Renewable Energies/Energy Systems Technology” trains systems engineers to support the transition to sustainable energy systems. It provides a solid foundation in mathematics, physics, process engineering, electrical engineering, thermal engineering, and computer science, before delving into more advanced topics in thermal and electrical energy systems engineering in subsequent semesters. The program culminates in a practical training phase and a bachelor's thesis, during which students tackle specific projects from industry, the energy sector, or research. Central to sustainable design: The program develops students' ability to analyze complex energy systems holistically and reflect on them critically—a skill that is essential for climate-friendly technologies and resilient supply structures. The instructors come from the fields of research, development, and industry, ensuring that the course content is always up to date and focused on practical application. Experiential learning is supported by state-of-the-art laboratories, such as those for solar and wind energy technology.



“The Renewable Energies program provides knowledge about sustainable energy production and technological development. This knowledge is essential for a sustainable and renewable energy supply.”

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Marc Deissenroth-Uhrig
Professorship for Renewable Energies



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/erneuerbare-energien

The “Urban Planning Project” Module

The “Urban Planning Project” course in the master’s program in Architecture combines design practice with analytical methods of urban and spatial planning, providing students with a comprehensive education in urban planning. Students learn to assess complex urban structures in the context of social change and climate adaptation and to develop transformative concepts for sustainable urban spaces. Key topics include the shaping of urbanity through the integration of blue-green infrastructure, sustainable mobility, and multi-functional open spaces, as well as resource-sensitive construction to minimize ecological and economic impacts. Project weeks and field trips provide hands-on learning opportunities, while international perspectives foster intercultural understanding and teamwork. By closely integrating theory, design, and critical reflection, the module strengthens creative, technical, and organizational skills and equips students to responsibly facilitate urban transformation processes in the interest of sustainable, resilient urban development. With 18 ECTS credits, it offers an in-depth, interdisciplinary exploration of contemporary urban planning.



“The ‘Urban Planning Project’ module combines design, analysis, and sustainability—it fosters teamwork, critical thinking, and responsible action for sustainable urban development.”

Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Jens Metz

Professorship for Urban Planning, Transformation, and Design



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/staedtebau

“Forum for Responsibility” Project Module

Since 2025, the htw saar has offered a sustainability project in cooperation with the Forum for Responsibility Foundation as a required elective for advanced undergraduate economics students during the winter semester. As part of the program, an interdisciplinary colloquium at the European Academy Otzenhausen addresses topics such as climate tipping points, water crises, biodiversity loss, artificial intelligence, and global conflicts under the theme “Challenges in Times of Multiple Crises.” The course promotes sustainable learning through critical thinking: students work to identify systemic causes and develop innovative solutions through workshops and discussions. This approach teaches scientific methodology while simultaneously strengthening practical judgment—key competencies for sustainable, responsible action. Through its interdisciplinary focus and cross-disciplinary exchange, the module fosters the ability to view and communicate complex sustainability issues holistically. In this way, the colloquium makes a significant contribution to education for sustainable development - by empowering students early on to act effectively in academia, politics, and society.



“The module with the “Forum for Responsibility” foundation does more than just highlight the consequences of the climate crisis. It equips aspiring economists to think holistically about global challenges within economic processes.”

Prof. Dr. Petra Garnjost

Fundamentals of Business Administration and Management



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/nh-kolloquium



Research and Knowledge Transfer

The htw saar is a research-intensive university with an impressive track record in securing external funding. Sustainability is implicitly a guiding principle: the research conducted at the htw saar aims to develop solutions to key societal challenges such as climate change, resource conservation, and social responsibility. This is best achieved through a holistic, transdisciplinary approach. With its four schools—Architecture and Civil Engineering, Engineering, Social Sciences, and Business—the htw saar provides ideal conditions for this. Sustainability is thus approached and implemented from technological, economic, social, and design perspectives.

We view sustainability as a cross-disciplinary endeavor that is embedded in numerous research projects and fields. Working closely with partners from the business sector, government, and civil society, scientific findings are translated into practical applications. Students, doctoral candidates, staff, and partners actively contribute to the development of sustainable solutions, thereby strengthening the htw saar's capacity for innovation and regional economic growth. As a university and a key player in society, we contribute to environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable transformation through interdisciplinary collaboration, applied research projects, and active engagement.

A significant portion of our research activities takes place within the framework



of international collaborative projects, such as EU-funded INTERREG programs. Together with partners from the Greater Region, we develop sustainable solutions to cross-border challenges in these programs, for example in the areas of climate-friendly mobility, energy supply, and socio-spatial development. Our projects also have a strong regional impact through the Saarland Transformation Fund. They address future-oriented topics such as energy efficiency, digitalization, health, the mobility transition, and resilient infrastructure, and, together with partners, translate scientific findings into concrete applications.

The university's internal seed funding program, provides professors with start-up funding to support innovative projects. Key selection criteria include the project's innovative content and societal relevance, knowledge and technology transfer, scalability, and its contribution to addressing societal challenges (megatrends).

Key future-oriented topics are addressed in the centers of excellence that have been systematically established since 2021. The interdisciplinary research clusters Future Transportation Society (FTS), Digital Neurotechnologies (CDNS), Fluid Dynamics and Simulation Technology (KoS), and Climate Impact Adapta-



tion and Disaster Management (KoK2) make direct and indirect contributions to sustainable development. This network is complemented by affiliated institutes such as the Institute for Future Energy and Material Flow Systems (IZES gGmbH), which connect research, industry, and society.

Spin-offs from the htw saar play a key role in driving knowledge transfer and innovation. Many startups emerge directly from applied research. A prime example is VENSYS Energy AG, which was founded in 2000 as a spin-off of the Wind Energy Research Group at the htw saar and has grown into an internationally active developer and licensor of gearless wind turbines.

Those interested in starting a business are supported at the htw saar through consulting, mentoring, and targeted communication services. The “knowhow@htw saar” transfer fair showcases current research projects and fosters dialogue with industry and society, supported by initiatives such as the research magazine “sichtbar.”

In the following we present four transdisciplinary projects focused on sustainability from the INTERREG funding program, the Transformation Fund, and the centers of excellence.



Kompetenzzentrum
für Klimafolgenanpassung
und Katastrophenschutz
der htw saar



Kompetenzzentrum
für Strömungsmaschinen,
Simulation und Messtechnik



The five transdisciplinary centers of excellence currently at the htw saar

INCLUREG—Toward an Inclusive and Sustainable Workforce in the Greater Region

Through the INTERREG VI-A project INCLUREG, the htw saar and its partners in the Greater Region are working to sustainably improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the primary labor market. The goal is to promote inclusive employment models, ensure the long-term viability of workshops for people with disabilities, and strengthen cross-border cooperation. The focus is on training, digitalization, and innovative logistics solutions - particularly in the field of Industry 4.0. To this end, existing structures are analyzed, best practices are identified, and these are tested in pilot projects. Workshop employees receive targeted training to keep pace with technological developments and tap into new areas of employment. As the lead partner, the htw saar coordinates the activities of a total of seven collaborating partners and nine strategic partners from Germany, France, Luxembourg, and Belgium. This close, transdisciplinary collaboration results in concrete recommendations for action and regional implementation plans aimed at establishing inclusive work structures for the long term. In this way, INCLUREG actively contributes to greater social participation, securing a skilled workforce, and sustainable development across national borders.

“There are reasons why people with disabilities are unable to enter the primary labor market. One of these reasons is the lack of transition possibilities from sheltered workshops for people with disabilities. We collaborate with sheltered workshops across the Greater Region to improve this situation through new technologies.”



Prof. Dr. Kerstin Rock

Professorship for Interaction and Organization in Social Work

School of Social Sciences



→ For more information, visit:
interreg-gr.eu/de/project/inclureg-de

Greater Green+—Connecting a Greener Greater Region

The cross-border project Greater Green+ supports the sustainable transformation of the Greater Region by connecting stakeholders from business, research, and the public sector in the field of green tech. The goal is to highlight innovative solutions to environmental challenges, further develop them, and put them into practice. Key focus areas include renewable energy, sustainable construction, recycling, water and environmental technologies, and the bioeconomy.

Through workshops, specialized events, working groups, and digital exchange platforms, Greater Green+ promotes knowledge transfer and cross-border cooperation. A digital platform that brings together sustainable technologies, expertise, and opportunities for collaboration plays a central role in this effort. The htw saar contributes its application-oriented research and close ties with regional companies, serving as a key link between academia and industry. In this way, the project helps strengthen innovation, resource efficiency, and environmental responsibility in the region.



“Greater Green+ demonstrates how cross-border collaboration accelerates innovation. The project bridges the gap between research and practice, making sustainable technologies practically applicable for businesses.”

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Pascal Stoffels

Professor of Production Informatics

School of Engineering



→ For more information, visit:
interreg-gr.eu/de/project/greenergreen-de

KoK²—Climate Preparedness and Disaster Response

The Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management Center of Excellence at the htw saar (KoK²) brings together scientific and technical expertise to address current and future climate risks. Its goal is to develop practical tools to strengthen climate resilience and disaster risk management in Saarland and to implement them at the local level.

The focus is on developing innovative methods to protect people, the environment, and infrastructure. Among other initiatives, a “Climate Hazard Defense System” (KliGAS) is being developed as an early warning system for natural hazards such as flooding and heavy rain. Particular emphasis is placed on crisis preparedness with regard to critical infrastructure in the areas of energy and water supply, as well as wastewater disposal. Close collaboration with ministries, local governments, specialized agencies, and research partners ensures effective knowledge transfer into practice.

KoK² thus makes a significant contribution to sustainable development in Saarland—through preparedness, protection, and adaptation in addressing the impacts of climate change.



“We want to protect people and the environment from the effects of climate change. That’s why we’re researching new approaches and methods for crisis prevention and disaster response.”

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Alpaslan Yörük,
Dipl.-Ing. (FH) Andreas Biehler,
Prof. Dr.-Ing. Joachim Dettmar

KoK² management team

School of Architecture and Civil Engineering



Kompetenzzentrum
für Klimafolgenanpassung
und Katastrophenschutz
der htw saar



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/kok2

ECO²—Cooperative Research Group

Circular value creation plays a central role at the htw saar. In collaboration with the Fraunhofer Institute for Non-Destructive Testing (IZFP), two cooperative research groups have been established, funded by the state of Saarland. The ECO² Research Group develops ecological and economic optimization methods to maximize the reuse, repair, and recycling of products and technologies throughout their life cycle. This allows materials to be kept in circulation in a targeted manner, waste to be reduced, and CO₂ emissions to be lowered.

The htw saar provides expertise in applied research, methodology development, and product and process optimization within the context of circular value creation. In doing so, it strengthens its role as a driver of sustainable products and industrial processes and supports the training of skilled professionals advancing the transition to a circular economy.



“We want to design technologies and processes in a way that combines ecology and economy—closing loops, reducing emissions, and simultaneously enabling sustainable value creation.”

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Christian Köhler
Professor of Industrial Engineering
Business School



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/eco2



Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is an integral part of the htw saar's identity. Learning is viewed as a social process that is supported by a vibrant social environment. Here, people from diverse backgrounds, with varied experiences and perspectives, come together to learn from and with one another and to actively shape their academic and professional environment. For us, this diversity is a great opportunity—it shapes our shared community and strengthens the university in its social responsibility. To fulfill this responsibility, the htw saar has deliberately established structures that enable participation, provide support, and promote equal opportunities. External certifications, such as that of a Fairtrade University, reinforce this commitment. A wide range of counseling, support, and professional development services is available to students and staff in various stages of life and career development.

The social partnership between the university as an employer and the staff councils plays a central role in this. Together with university leadership, they establish a reliable framework for good working conditions, professional development, and work-life balance.

Through transparent procedures and advisory support, the Human Resources Department makes a significant contribution to a respectful and equitable work environment.



A key framework for our interactions is the Code of Conduct, which translates the values of the Teaching Mission Statement into clear guidelines for behavior and fosters an inclusive, respectful, and discrimination-free academic environment. Supplementary service agreements—such as those regarding working hours, remote work, and inclusion—establish a reliable framework that supports the work-life balance. In addition, a wide range of counseling and support services are available, ranging from academic planning and assistance with financial and family matters to psychological and psychotherapeutic counseling, as well as support for overcoming barriers to academic success. Parent-child rooms at the Alt-Saarbrücken and Rotenbühl campuses, partnerships with the Hohenzollern Daycare Center in Alt-Saarbrücken, and children's summer programs help make university life more family-friendly.

The htw saar also sets a clear example in the areas of internal qualification (iQ) and lifelong learning: This includes the widely used iQ continuing education program with thematic workshops and the “WissenKompakt” format, through which departments present their services.

These initiatives strengthen employees' professional and personal development. International Weeks and job shadowing complement these offerings by introducing perspectives from other university cultures, broadening the intercultural competencies of the university community, and fostering a global understanding of sustainable development. In addition, the StudiumPlus program offers students the opportunity to integrate theory and practice more closely and to develop specific skills through additional, extracurricular learning modules open to students across all degree programs.

The following pages provide a closer look at four key thematic areas that are particularly influential in shaping our understanding of social sustainability: equal opportunity and diversity, student engagement, internationalization, and health and well-being. All of these offerings are initially designed as services for university members; however, through graduates and partnerships with other companies and institutions, they also have a guiding influence on society.



Equality and Diversity

The htw saar has made equality and diversity central components of its sustainable institutional development. The president is primarily responsible for the strategic direction, implementation, and ongoing development of related initiatives. Through the Equality Monitor, the Women's Advancement Plan, and the equality policies, long-term structures are being created to ensure equal opportunities. These include the advancement of women in higher education and research, the compatibility of studies, work, and research with caregiving responsibilities, raising awareness for gender and diversity issues, targeted support for young women in STEM fields, the establishment of support structures, and financial assistance measures. The htw saar is also certified as a "family-friendly university," promotes diversity through initiatives such as the "Shaping Diversity" audit, and has benefited from funding for five professorships to date through the federal government's Women Professors Program (III and 2030). This is how the htw saar combines sustainable structures with individualized support, guidance, and counseling.



"A diverse university only truly thrives when everyone is able to contribute their full potential. At the htw saar, we aim to create an environment that encourages participation, values diversity, and takes individual life circumstances into account."

Ricarda Jacob, M. A.
Equal Opportunity Officer



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/gleichstellung

Student Involvement: The “Sustainability Reporter” Project

The idea for the “Sustainability Reporter” project emerged in 2022 during a discussion held as part of a sustainability module. This was because, while operational and structural shortcomings were obvious to students, the university’s strengths in research, teaching, and social engagement were not immediately apparent.

After receiving a professional introduction to the fundamentals of journalism, student reporters research and document projects, initiatives, and measures that contribute positively to achieving the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. In interviews with project leaders, they explore hydrogen as an energy source, business ethics, student mentoring models, workplace gender equality, and educational initiatives in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods, offering student-led coverage for the university community.



“It was really exciting to discover just how much sustainability is woven into every aspect of the university. It was fun to explore this from a student’s perspective.”

Linda Herrmann (left) and Jana Bauer (right) in an interview with Agnes Jasiok, M. A.

Sustainability reporters, “Balu und Du”-Project



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/nachhaltigkeitsreporter

Support for International Students

Internationality is a central component of teaching and campus life at the htw saar. About 22% of full-time students hold a foreign passport, and 12% obtained their university entrance qualification abroad. In addition, the university welcomes numerous international students each year for at least one semester of study abroad, particularly through programs such as Erasmus+ or partnerships with institutions like the Franco-German University Institute (DFHI/ISFATES). At the same time, the htw saar regularly sends students abroad for one or more semesters, for example to pursue dual degrees. A comprehensive range of language courses, including German as a foreign language, supports these mobility opportunities and facilitates integration.

In addition, the university offers special programs for refugees, including academic preparation and buddy programs that promote equal opportunities. One example is the student project “Orient meets Occident,” which has been supporting Arabic-speaking students as they begin their studies since 2019. In 2025, its founder, Fadi Othmann, received the Saarland Special Award for Student Engagement for this project. As part of the joint project “QUAZAR—Qualification and Labour Market Integration of International Experts,” implemented in collaboration with Saarland University and funded by the DAAD, the htw saar contributes to the sustainable qualification and integration of skilled workers.



“International students enrich our campus both academically and culturally. Our mission is to provide them with guidance, support, and a warm and welcoming environment so that their time here as students becomes a meaningful experience that allows them to truly participate in campus life.”

Norma Dettloff, M. A.

Support for international degree-seeking students



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/io

Health and Well-Being

In 2018, a Workplace Health Management (WHM) program was established at the htw saar under the auspices of the Vice President for Administration and Business Management: the WHM coordinator oversees the development of a needs-based WHM concept for systematic health promotion and coordinates the planning, implementation, and evaluation of key initiatives. In 2020, the Health Steering Committee was also established. It brings together representatives from university administration, the staff council, the human resources department, the representative body for employees with severe disabilities, the office for gender equality, occupational safety, university sports, the family office, and human resources development, as well as external experts, to shape the strategic direction of the workplace health management program. Among its tasks was the implementation and evaluation of the risk assessment for psychological stress, which took place in 2020/21 and 2025 and from which concrete measures were derived and implemented.

The htw saar offers employees a wide range of health programs: flu vaccinations, preventive eye exams, seminars on topics like stress management and communication, team workshops, psychological counseling services, ergonomic workplace improvements, leadership development programs, university sports, and regular healthcare days. This is complemented by coaching and training programs for managers, individual health counseling, and smaller initiatives such as water bottles featuring htw saar's corporate design.



"Workplace health is more than just preventing work-related absences. It is the foundation for motivation, productivity, and quality of life. People are at the center of it all."

Sabrina Wahlster, B. Sc.

Occupational Health Management



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/bgm



Operations and Mobility

The htw saar is a public-law entity. As a state-run institution, it cannot act independently under building regulations because the state owns its buildings and overarching agreements—such as those covering energy and procurement—limit its scope of action.

Within this framework, however, the university consciously fosters a social environment. As a campus university, it depends on adequate space and mobility. People come together on campus to learn, work, and spend time, breathing life into the surrounding areas. This dynamic also extends into the neighborhood. The htw saar actively reaches out to the community, for example through the “University in the City” initiative, as part of which the university participated in the state capital’s “Sommerstraßen 2025” project and opened the “Campus Avenue” (Campusallee) to cultural events. The htw saar cafeterias are also meeting places for students, staff, and external guests of all ages. These forms of community cannot be replaced in the digital space.

University operations are inextricably linked to resource consumption. Electricity, drinking water, heat, fuel, IT infrastructure, and developed land are necessary to support teaching, research, and administration. The construction and maintenance of libraries, laboratories, lecture halls, and office buildings generate significant amounts of CO₂ emissions. At the same time, universities educate skilled professionals and develop solutions for sustainable societal transformation. This requires consciously shaping operations through energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable mobility, digital solutions, responsible procurement, and the mindful use of materials and media. This makes the unavoidable ecological footprint the starting point for responsible action.

Energy consumption at the htw saar is systematically tracked and entered into the BayCalc monitoring tool. This ensures transparency and provides a reliable basis for identifying opportunities for savings, reviewing progress, and continuously refining measures. The Campus Management and University Services Department is responsible for the sustainable management of heating, electricity, and water supplies, as well as building management. It develops energy-saving measures and optimizes the use of renewable energy. The Office of University Construction and Campus Development ensures that new construction and renovation projects are carried out in accordance with environmental standards. In collaboration with the Sustainability Department, Campus Management works to continuously reduce the university's carbon footprint and improve energy efficiency across all campuses.

The htw saar itself is also affected by the consequences of climate change.

Rising temperatures and extreme weather require adjustments to building operations in order to ensure a healthy learning and working environment. In addition to heating and cooling, this includes providing portable fans, free drinking water, and flexible work-from-home policies during periods of extreme heat and black ice. These measures demonstrate that sustainable action necessitates a balance between protecting health and conserving resources. Climate adaptation therefore requires progressive concepts that combine ecological, social, and economic sustainability. The following section examines the future of campus development at the Alt-Saarbrücken site and presents initial key figures on consumption as well as details of the mobility concept.



Campus Development and Construction of Building 12

Existing buildings on the Alt-Saarbrücken campus can no longer be renovated. In addition, the space requirements analysis indicated a greater need for laboratory and classroom space. As a result, the state of Saarland has approved extensive replacements and expansion projects. The award-winning design for the planned Building 12 sets a clear example of sustainable architecture and responsible campus development. The concept combines modern teaching and research spaces with ecologically sound construction. This will be the first public building in Saarland to meet the BNB Silver Standard. This pilot project aims to demonstrate how a functional university building can meet the challenges of modern teaching methods on the one hand, and the growing demands for climate protection, resource conservation, and energy efficiency on the other. The winning design stands out for its clear structure and flexible uses. An optimized building envelope reduces energy consumption, while integrated photovoltaic systems enable decentralized and climate-friendly energy generation. Sustainable materials, natural lighting, a green roof, and good connectivity to campus facilities also play a key role in the design's success. The newly established bike lane runs right alongside the campus building.



"This project not only creates additional space for teaching and research, but also showcases the htw saar's commitment to sustainable construction and strengthens its profile as a future-oriented university."

Dipl.-Ing. Tanja Sattler, M. Eng.

University Construction and Campus Development



→ For more
information, visit:
htwsaar.de/campusentwicklung

Greenhouse Gas Accounting

As part of preparing the sustainability report, we began systematically tracking greenhouse gas emissions. The goal is to establish a transparent and traceable data foundation that both reflects current emission levels and identifies areas for future reduction measures. Greenhouse gas accounting is a central component of the strategic development of the university's sustainability initiatives.

We took a look at other universities to analyze existing approaches and tools for greenhouse gas accounting. In addition, various data collection tools were evaluated. The decisive factors were the system's fundamental compatibility with the university's structural conditions and the ability to regularly collect and analyze location-specific emissions—given the university's multiple geographically dispersed campuses and heterogeneous energy supply—in order to provide a detailed breakdown of university-specific emission sources. Another key criterion was the mapping of relevant emission categories according to direct emissions from operations (Scope 1), indirect emissions resulting from, for example, the purchase of energy sources (Scope 2), and emissions along the value chains (Scope 3). Additionally, the system was designed to allow for intuitive data entry and the ability to consolidate information from various internal data sources. Based on these criteria, the decision was made to use the BayCalc tool.¹

The survey for the categories listed was conducted for the 2024 period and covers all locations. This first report does not include data on procurement and waste. In addition to emissions from the HIZ data center—which is centrally operated by all universities in Saarland—the report does not include purchased goods and capital assets (machinery and equipment; consumables) or waste disposal.

A key focus of this first report is the analysis of mobility-related CO₂ emissions (see below, Mobility Concept).

1 BayCalc guidelines (Version 2.1) for accounting for greenhouse gas emissions
From Universities in Bavaria; November 2025; www.bayzen.de/materialien/baycalc

Emissions categories	Scope 1	Scope 2	Scope 3	Sum	Share
Natural gas, heating oil	83.4		22.7	106	2.2%
Electricity			136.16	136	2.8%
District heating		284.5		285	5.8%
Water/Wastewater			2.53	3	0.1%
→ Buildings	83.4	285	161.4	529	10.7%
Commuting			4,256	4,256	86.4%
Vehicle fleet	25.3		6.6	32	0.7%
Business travel			106.8	107	2.2%
→ Mobility	25.3		4,369.4	4,395	89.3%
Sum	108.7	285.0	4,530	4,924	100.0%

htw saar 2025 GHG inventory, figures in t CO₂e; excluding waste, procurement, and the data center emissions.

Although the figures presented here are subject to some inaccuracies and comparisons between universities are difficult due to differences in data collection methods and calculation approaches, it is clear that the, by far, largest source of emissions is university staff commuting. Overall, the annual specific greenhouse gas emissions of the htw saar (0.75 t CO₂e/person; 0.12 t CO₂e/m² per year of floor space) rank in the lower middle range in an international comparison of universities.² Thanks to the use of green electricity, the relatively high electricity demand contributes only minimally to total CO₂ emissions. If electricity were sourced from the German grid mix, emissions would be more than ten times higher, at 1,510 t CO₂e.

The greenhouse gas accounting system is designed so that data collection can be further developed, refined, and standardized. As such, it forms the basis for external verification or certification.

2 Helmers, E., Chang, C.C. & Dauwels, J. Carbon footprinting of universities worldwide: Part I—objective comparison by standardized metrics. Environ Sci Eur 33, 30 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-021-00454->

Mobility Strategy

The htw saar considers itself a campus-based university. Social interaction enhances the learning process, teams collaborate more efficiently in person, and on-site services and laboratories require staff to be present on campus. Travel to and from project partners, field trips, and conference participation foster knowledge acquisition and exchange. Modern transportation makes it possible for many people from diverse backgrounds to come together. At the same time, commuting and travel consume resources to such an extent that mobility-related greenhouse gas emissions account for the largest share of the htw saar's carbon footprint. With this in mind, the htw saar has developed a comprehensive mobility strategy in collaboration with an external service provider. The goal is to estimate mobility-related CO₂ emissions and reduce the htw saar's CO₂ emissions through a modern, climate-friendly, and socially equitable mix of transportation options. Data on international mobility (cross-border commuters, Erasmus+, DFHI) was not included in this initial report.

The analyses clearly show that the largest share of CO₂ emissions comes from commuting by university members. Business travel and the vehicle fleet account for only a single-digit percentage. Commuting over long distances and within local areas in particular offers potential for reducing CO₂ emissions by promoting carpooling and bicycle use.



A survey conducted as part of the mobility strategy, along with vehicle counts, indicates significant potential for carpooling. During an implementation workshop, it was therefore decided to introduce a digital carpooling platform as a priority measure. It is intended to facilitate networking, reduce emissions, and save costs at the same time.

To encourage bicycle use within a ten-kilometer radius, more weather-protected parking facilities and service stations will be installed, and efforts will be made to improve connections to municipal bike paths. By the end of 2025, the first bike boulevard in Saarland—connecting the Alt-Saarbrücken campus with the city center—was completed. Participation in “Stadtradeln,” the JobRad leasing program, and the AStA bike repair shop already complement current offerings. These measures were presented at the Bicycle Awareness Day and workshop in July 2025, among other events, and discussed across all stakeholder groups.



Although the company’s vehicle fleet accounts for only a small portion of total emissions, its transition to a corporate car-sharing model consisting exclusively of electric vehicles serves as a model for others to follow. The transition will be linked to the development of a service-oriented digital booking and management platform, which will eventually also allow university members to bill private trips taken in pool vehicles.

	Currently p.a.	Potential savings	Potential savings	Target
Commuting	4,256	-1,163	27%	3,093 t
Business trips	107	-11	10%	96 t

Transport-related CO₂ emissions and potential for savings

All measures are accompanied by information and public participation: interactive mobility maps, as well as campaigns and contests, make sustainable mobility visible and tangible. The htw saar views mobility not as a restriction, but as an opportunity for greater flexibility, better health, and climate protection—and as a way to fulfill its role as a model for the region.



“For us, sustainable mobility is more than just a concept—it combines climate protection, health, and flexibility. With our mobility strategy, we aim to identify ways to make commuting and business travel both resource-efficient and appealing.”

Dr. Markus Ehses
Sustainability Officer



→ For more information, visit:
htwsaar.de/mobilitaet

Imprint

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