

Sustainability Mission Statement of the Leibniz Association

Adopted by the General Assembly of the Leibniz Association on 28 November 2019.

Preamble

The Leibniz Association sees sustainability as an important guiding factor throughout its operations. Through their research and activities, the Leibniz Association and its member institutions help society respond to the major challenges it faces. Within the political frame of reference provided by the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they focus continuing developments in science, research and research-based knowledge and technology transfer on the goal of sustainability. At the same time, they also contribute to the sustainability goal through staff training and the sustainable design of research processes.

Motivation and definition

The Leibniz Association is guided by the United Nations' international policy strategies, such as the Rio Declaration (1992) and the SDGs (2015), which employ the normative concept of sustainable development as defined by the Brundtland Commission.¹ The Leibniz Association's considerable involvement in the LeNa project and the resulting document on sustainability management in non-university research organisations² has already developed a shared understanding of the spheres of activity of sustainability management in the specific context of research.

Sustainability-oriented science and research applies equally to operational processes and research processes, and therefore addresses all employees. The focus is on

- Sustainability in organisational development,
- Sustainability in research processes,
- Sustainability in personnel management (employees),
- Sustainability management in the operation of buildings and infrastructure, and in procurement and transport.

¹ <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm> (accessed on 30 Oct. 2019)

² Joint LeNa project funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF): <https://www.nachhaltig-forschen.de>

This Sustainability Mission Statement provides a framework for a ‘culture of sustainability’ in the Leibniz Association and its member institutions – a culture that must be established and continuously built on within the various spheres of activity. The Leibniz institutions’ scientific freedom and economic and legal independence remain unaffected by this. The aim of the mission statement is also for all employees of Leibniz institutions to reflect on their actions in these spheres and to contribute to the sustainable development of the association.

Strategic and organisational development

The Leibniz Association and its institutions enshrine the guiding principle of sustainable development in all structures, procedures and management processes within the organisation. In doing so, they also refer to the Guiding Principles for our Actions in the Leibniz Association.³ For this, it is necessary to take account of sustainability and its requirements in all business processes, from programme planning to personnel management and operational processes, from management level to staff level, as well as in the research activities themselves. The systematic observance of sustainable development aims in strategic and operational management will be supported by appropriate committees and dedicated working groups for the implementation of sustainability-related processes, or by sustainability officers.

‘Good compliance’ principles apply, e.g. with regard to issues of research ethics, dual-use problems, misuse of power, data protection and compliance with legal frameworks like the Nagoya Protocol. Where relevant, from planning and carrying out individual research projects to setting up research programmes, institutions should assess ethical and safety-related risks against clear criteria and deal with them transparently at all times. The Leibniz Association is guided by the relevant rules and standards, and sees adherence to ethical principles as an integral part of a modern sustainability strategy.

Sustainability in the research process

The Leibniz Association stands for best research practice, incorporating scientific excellence and social relevance. Nearly all of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their targets are addressed by future-oriented environmental and social topics within the profile fields of the Leibniz Association’s five scientific sections:

- Cultural heritage and education,
- Economic and spatial development, democratic participation and social integration,
- Biodiversity and health,
- Light, materials and information, and
- Environment and sustainable development.

³ <https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en/about-us/leibniz-integrity/guiding-principles-for-our-actions.html>

In addition, in the context of sustainability research, Leibniz Institutes not only generate findings about the history and basic principles of education, global justice and social integration, and the relationship between humans and the environment, but also explore the discursive functions and behavioural patterns that have been associated with the concept of sustainability since the 1980s. In doing so, they contribute to a reflective classification of the debate.

In addition, within the framework of their programme planning and cooperative ventures – including Leibniz Research Alliances, Leibniz Research Networks and collaborative projects within the Leibniz Competition – the Leibniz institutions always use their expertise to promote and develop a better understanding of sustainable development within their own topic areas. This can mean involving employees in change and strategy processes, as well as working with external partners from science, politics, industry and society in a spirit of transdisciplinarity.

According to the recommendations from the LeNa process, important evaluation criteria for responsible research are: an integrative approach, interdisciplinarity, user focus, reflection on effect and effectiveness, transdisciplinarity, transparency, ethics and dealing with complexity and uncertainty. The rules of good scientific practice are fundamental here, particularly for sustainable research activity in the narrower sense.

Sustainable personnel management (employees)

The success of any organisation depends on its ability to attract excellent staff at all levels, to deploy them well in useful ways and to support them in a targeted manner. The Leibniz Association pays particular attention to this: committees and dedicated project groups, including the Career Development project group, constantly strive to improve working conditions in the Leibniz Association.⁴

For the Leibniz Association, sustainable personnel management means systematically aligning the entire personnel management system with the organisation's medium- and long-term aims. At the same time, sustainable personnel management stands for equal opportunities, respect for diversity, and the ability to balance work and care responsibilities.

To ensure its effectiveness, personnel management at the Leibniz Association focuses on the following aims, guided by the LeNa recommendations:

- Service-oriented personnel management,
- Systematic personnel development and
- Networking and cooperation in research, teaching and the promotion of young talent

⁴ See the Guidelines for Career Development in the Leibniz Association, the Guiding Principles for our Actions in the Leibniz Association, the Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice in the Leibniz Association, the Standards for Appointments to Academic Management Positions within the Leibniz Association, and the Leibniz Equality Standards.

These aims are an integral part of strategic and operational management within the Leibniz Association.

Sustainability management in the operation of buildings and infrastructure, and in procurement and transport

In order to fulfil their research mission, the institutions of the Leibniz Association operate various research infrastructure facilities, manage buildings and outdoor facilities, and carry out procurement activities and business trips. In the areas of construction, operation, procurement and transport management, the Leibniz Association has numerous sustainable options for using earmarked resources, and systematically takes these options into consideration as part of its sustainability management.

Moreover, the Leibniz Association and its member institutions assess ways of committing to other specific sustainability measures, including measures for reducing their carbon footprint.