

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

2017-18 Impact Report

1. Background

Vrije Universiteit Brussel is now one of over 450 organisations who have the Green Impact model. Thank you for being part of this expanding movement. For more information on the programme, visit www.nus.org.uk/greenimpact.

This impact report outlines activity and achievements seen this year, as well as estimations of some financial and carbon reduction benefits that have come about as a result of the programme.

Thank you so much for everything you've put into Green Impact this year. We're really proud of what the programme's achieved, and hope you are too.

2. The bigger picture

Green Impact is a change and engagement programme – it helps people understand sustainability and social responsibility, shows them what they can do to make a difference, and supports them in achieving these actions.

It has been developed over the last ten years, using social change theory and NUS' expertise to produce a model that works in all environments and workplaces year-after-year. It covers the whole sustainability spectrum and is based on the themes of continual improvement, collaboration and meaningful change to establish new social norms and inspire people with the skills and passion needed to make a difference.

In 2017/18, Green Impact has:



Been used by 290 organisations ranging from students' unions to NHS Trusts



Engaged 42,973 people in sustainability and social justice issues



Provided 840 students with training and development opportunities



Been made up of 1,094 teams led by 6,903 people



Seen 42,232 actions completed, 28,117 as a direct result of the programme

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We're delighted that:

- 88.9% of participants last year found the programme either excellent or good;
- 87.3% of people reported that Green Impact had encouraged them to engage in the sustainability agenda; and,
- 75.4% of people said that after being involved with Green Impact they're more likely to encourage others in the sustainability agenda too.

We know this because so many of you take the time to tell us - from time to time, we ask participants of the programme to provide feedback on its impact as well as to evaluate how the programme is run and how it can be improved. We know that surveys can be boring, but we're really grateful to people who complete these as it helps us better understand what the programme achieves and what we can do to better support those involved.

To see more examples of what's being done by Green Impact teams across the country, search for the Twitter hashtag #GreenImpact and of course, don't forget to tweet about your actions too.

3. Within your sector

This year Vrije Universiteit Brussel is one of 43 universities taking part in the Green Impact programme. In Europe there are four universities taking part in Green Impact with VUB being the first to take part in the programme. Our partner organisation RootAbility are supporting European universities with the Green Impact, offering them tailored, on-site support. This year Green Impact has also expanded to Australia where nine universities are taking part proving that Green Impact is an adaptable international change and engagement programme.

4. Headline achievements at VUB

The programme at VUB continues to go from strength-to-strength. This year the Green Team at VUB have grown the number of teams taking part from five to eight, showing that the programme has the opportunity to develop year on year. The team ran an engaging power week, offered gifts and support to all teams and have been in contact with all participants throughout the year. To summarise the achievements of the programme this year:

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8 teams participated



Engaged 189 colleagues



Achieved 6 bronze awards



Achieved 2 silver awards



Achieved 0 gold awards



Been led by 37 team members – your average team size is 5



Put 221 actions into place, 151 as a direct result of Green Impact



Provided 7 students with training and development opportunities in their roles as auditors



Saved at least 21173kg CO2



Saved at least €12869.86

In addition:

- We created a specific student tab for students across the university to be engaged with the programme. Whilst the uptake this year has not reached its potential, it is a great start in thinking how staff and students can work together on the sustainability agenda.
- NUS ran two webinars to bring together Green Impact participants to talk about their experience of the programme and to motivate and inspire people to continue to implement changes within their departments. The Green Team coordinated these on campus and fed back that teams enjoying being together in the same room to see that others were taking part.
- This year NUS have been supported by RootAbility at VUB. RootAbility are NUS' European partners who are leading on supporting Green Impact organisations in Europe. They have been involved in every aspect of Green Impact at VUB, providing useful insight and ideas to help the programme at VUB.

5. Tangible cost and carbon savings

Every team is at different starting points before they start Green Impact and every team implements actions in a different way. Therefore it's difficult to know exactly what the collective impact of the actions are. However, it's something we're working on and in the next cycle of the programme, more criteria with direct, tangible cost and carbon savings will be included in the toolkit. For the 2017/18 cycle, we can make simple calculations to estimate the impact that combined actions may have had on both carbon reductions and financial savings. We look at how many teams have implemented certain actions, and use calculations based on the Carbon Trust's Empower tool. These are just some of the criteria but what this does show that across the whole university, and the whole workbook, Green Impact is creating some pretty significant changes, not just at a team level but to carbon emissions and financial cost:

- Approximately 168 people have been reached by promoting teleconferencing facilities over travelling to meetings (for example BA012). This could potentially save an estimated 9,530kg CO2 and €9,404.

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- This year an estimated 144 people have been reached by teams identifying how they can reduce paper consumption in their work space (BA008) potentially saving 7,776KG CO2 and €3,259.10.
- Some 144 people have been reached in the promotion and improvement of recycling facilities (BA016 and AD037), potentially saving 2,939KG CO2 as well as improving recycling rates across the university.
- There have been many other energy-saving actions put into place including 5 teams encouraging people to take the stairs instead of the lift (saving a potential 600kg CO2 and €106,39).
- Therefore, total identified potential carbon savings are 21173kg CO₂e and cost savings of €12869.86.

6. Value-added benefits

In addition to the environmental achievements of the programme, social and reputational benefits for the university have also been identified. Some of these are as a result of activities by the university sustainability team and NUS, whilst others have been identified as a result of evaluation surveys at the end of the programme. Whilst some of these may only currently be affecting certain areas or individuals, they do signal the value added benefits of the programme:

- Staff feel the programme has been good for team building and networking across the organisation, and improving staff morale. Others report that communication within their teams has improved.
- Staff liked that they could take the sustainable actions they implemented in the workplace, home as well.
- Staff report that the programme has encouraged their department to generally think more about efficiency and gave them a great opportunity to engage with students as well through environmental film screenings.
- The student auditors who participated in the programme were able to develop their communication, auditing, interpersonal, work ethics and interpretation skills.

7. Staff reactions and anecdotal evidence of change

Green Impact is fundamentally a staff engagement and behaviour change programme. Through post-programme evaluation and collating evidence of change over the course of the year, we're able to build a picture of the kind of impacts the programme is having on staff:

- 90% of staff responding to the end-of-programme survey either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: "Green Impact has encouraged me to engage in the sustainability agenda in future".
- 86% also felt that the university's support, communications and resources as part of the programme were either good or excellent.
- A whopping 100% of staff participating in the end-of-programme felt the overall programme experience was either good or excellent.
- 64% felt that the workbook aspect of the programme was reasonable, 21% found it challenging and 14% found it easy. Areas cited as challenging were finding time to participate, lack of support from management and engaging other colleagues in the programme. These are areas which will be addressed in next year's programme.
- There is also a chance the programme is impacting positively on people's home lives too. One participant has stated: "*I have started to recycle at home and grow my own veg saving on packaging.*"

8. Future impacts

The university and NUS are currently further analysing the processes undertaken over the last year to ensure the future delivery of the program is as effective as possible. At the same time a project plan for next year is being drafted to ensure the university continues to improve its positive Green Impact.

In addition to the success of scheme here at the university, as well as at the other organisations using Green Impact this year, we're now recruiting further organisations to the programme for the next year. If you know of an organisation who might benefit from taking part, get in touch.

For more information, news, case studies and information about NUS' other sustainability programmes, visit www.nus.org.uk/greenimpact or contact charlotte.bonner@nus.org.uk.

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