

To the Executive Board of Erasmus University Rotterdam

Rotterdam, 17 February 2023

Dear members of the Executive Board,

As members of the Sustainability Liaison Network, we send you an urgent request for help. This letter is intended to inform you about the necessary steps to empower our work.

As a network we represent all schools and several relevant departments of the EUR, sharing a strong passion to make our university more sustainable, thus contributing to our mission for positive societal impact. We started out in July 2021, online still, because of the pandemic.

Since then, we have come together nine times to discuss sustainability topics, share experiences and explore ways to speed up the university's sustainability program. In doing so, we have developed ourselves into a solid network of enthusiastic employees and students with a shared motivation to contribute to solving our society's most existential challenge: ecological overshoot / crossing planetary boundaries due to human activity. We have formulated our mission statement to enumerate how we envision our role (see annex).

When the idea of this network was presented early 2021 by the EUR program manager sustainability, the proposal was to make funding available to cover the time that is needed to create impact. Unfortunately, the decision at the time was that faculties and departments should cover the costs within their own budgets.

After functioning for roughly one and a half years, we need to reconsider our working conditions as a network. We notice that in practice the members do not have sufficient time available to implement improvements. Also, we feel that with the right institutional backing, the SLN could gain a more prominent position within each faculty or department and help synergize many of the different best practices happening already at EUR, as well as create projects the university expresses need for.

There are hopeful developments, such as the birth of a first departmental SLN (in EDIS), to strengthen the sustainability efforts within the department. Our aim is to create more of such structures, to strengthen and grow the EUR sustainability community and to gain strong traction for this necessary cause.

Needless to say that there are ample reasons to intensify the sustainability work:

- The increasing sense of urgency around the lack of progress, and examples of sustainable practices on campus, in course curricula and transparent reporting.
- The increasing demands for sustainability action in the EUR both by students and employees.
- The outcome of the midterm review of Strategy 2024, where the review panel strongly suggest giving Sustainability more priority.
- The recent developments around the Occupy EUR movement.

Therefore, we request the EB to set in motion with deans and directors:

- Cover formally the time needed of the liaisons to make the network more impactful,
- Assign a formal status and mandate for its mission to the Sustainability Liaison's members by promoting them as such in their work environment,
- Actively support the initiatives undertaken by the network,
- Facilitate the work by making space and financial means available.

We look forward to your reaction and invite you to attend one of our meetings so we can exchange thoughts directly, show the passion we bring to this work, and highlight our potential impact.

Respectfully,
The members of the Sustainability Liaison Network

Annex Mission Statement

Sustainability Liaison Network – SLN

Background

During the first meeting of the SLN on July 7th, 2021, we discussed our raison d'être. Gathering the various inputs and drafting them in a coherent statement, we came to the following. This is our compass.

Sustainability Liaison Network

Our Mission – The Sustainability Liaison Network (SLN), with members in every school, institute and relevant department of the EUR, is a learning platform where we discuss experiences and share best practices and challenges.

Our Vision – The Network sets out to integrate sustainability into all parts of the university by strengthening and growing our sustainability community.

Our Activities

1. We map the sustainability projects, policies and activities of schools and departments and identify synergies and best practices.
2. We open discussion on systematic sustainability issues and questions at EUR, and to facilitate proactive coordinated changes.
3. We create a Sustainability Report for 2021 and corresponding benchmarking criteria.
4. We contribute to achieving a higher ranking in the SustainaBul and Times Higher Education Impact Ranking by examining actions to coordinate the implementation of SDGs in education, research and operations.

Practicalities

- We use English unless you are more comfortable using Dutch.
- The EUR Program Manager Sustainability chairs the meetings.
- We meet every two months.
- In between the main meetings we organize ad hoc meetings.
- We use TEAMS as our platform for questions, input, exchange, storage of information and discussion in-between meetings.

We consider the network successful when

- The network members learn from each other and use ideas picked up in the group.
- The liaisons manage to activate their 'home base'.
- The liaisons enjoy sharing their experiences to the benefit of all.
- EUR publishes a Sustainability Report 2022 with the contributions of the SLN.