

# Sustainability ...

Sustainability is a practice where tools, materials, and different processes are used in such a way that they can be replaced without causing adverse effects, normally to the environment. Due to a limited supply of natural materials, and the ever present concern of the finite condition of many substances worldwide, its become super important to make sure we use things as quickly as they can be replaced.

Which is what makes sustainability different from like recycling, which is normally just reusing what we already have.

That's what we tried to bring together in this article and also how and in which form you will experience sustainability live and active at ExCo 2017.

There are millions of different definitions concerning the word sustainability and its meaning. We may present you our personal favourites in the following:

- **The quality of not being harmful to the environment or depleting natural resources, and thereby supporting long-term ecological balance.**  
**(<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/sustainability>)**
  
- **The idea that goods and services should be produced in ways that do not use resources that cannot be replaced and that do not damage the environment.**  
**(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sustainability>)**

In summary, "being sustainable" generally defines living and working in a way that does not rob future generations of the same resources as well possibilities we have, as well as does not harm the environment. Of course, it always depends on the level and field you define sustainability in. To bring „complete“ sustainability to the world, there are three big fields to be considered: social and cultural, environmental and economic sustainability.

We did a bit of brainstorming and want to present you a few ideas and important things everyone can do to contribute to a more sustainable world.

We split it into three big categories, which also fit for our event: Food, Lifestyle and Traveling.

## Food

- food ≠ waste  
The amount of food waste is estimated by the FAO to be at 1.3 billion tonnes a year . There are different reasons for it, depending on the country you're looking at – in developing countries it's e.g. the poor storing and cooling facilities, in Europe it's the overproduction and the really high expectations we have on the cosmetic values of our food. Around one third of the produced foods in Europe gets thrown away. From Supermarkets to households huge amounts of food lands in the waste bin due to impulse shopping. So what can we do?
  - go shopping with a shopping list, try to avoid impulse shopping in order to buy just the amount of food you need and are able to use
  - Use foodsharing (if that's an option in your country.. you will have a presentation about foodsharing during the ExCo)
  - Also „best before dates“ only mean best before and not that it's going to harm you after that date (a smelling and tasting test will help you to decide if eating it is still a good idea)

versus to consume up is a different matter, as seen on packages of ground beef for example.

- Do I need meat with every meal?  
The intensified production of meat and the high consume of meat is playing a big role in the question of sustainability. So watch out for seals and brands that tell you how environmental-friendly the meat-production was.  
With a veggie day a week you'll also contribute to the saving of resources.
- Where does my food come from?  
Some fruits and vegetables you will find in the supermarket have come a long way with a lot of CO<sub>2</sub>- emissions. Regional and seasonal food is the key to participate in the mission of keeping the emissions low(er).  
Have you heard about (austrian) alternatives to normal supermarkets?
  - Foodcoops: These are communities who order food once a week directly from the farmers themselves.
  - CSA (Community Supported Agriculture): you pay a specific amount of money to a farmer and get parts of the harvest in return.
  - local farmers markets : it's always a nice thing to do on weekend-mornings.

## Lifestyle

- Save water – pee under the shower (really and no it's not gross)  
In addition if you keep your showers short and as cool as possible – that's good for your cardiovascular system and the environment. We want you to be healthy!
  - Switch on the washing machine and the dishwasher only when they're full
  - filling the sink with water for washing dishes and not letting the tap run
  - Showering (if you don't shower super long) uses less water than filling the tub
  - Switching off the water while brushing your teeth
- No one needs the latest technical devices, e.g. tv, phone, computer. The amount of electronic waste in a year is estimated to be at 8,7 million tonnes in Europe (2012). You can contribute a lot to sustainability to not buy a phone every year.
- Second-hand(-clothing)  
Do some good, go to charity shops and buy second hand clothes. Swap clothes with your friend, go to flea markets, use your local online portals where you can buy second hand stuff. Second hand is always a win-win situation – makes seller and buyer happy :-).
- Recycling  
Glass bottles, plastics, cans, cardboards – can, at least partly, be reused when recycled!
- Unplug/switch off unused electronic devices  
Try to avoid the stand-by modus and just switch electronics off when they're not used. Also unused e.g. chargers are using power as soon as they're plugged in.
- Switch off the light when you're not in the room  
Save power and money by switching off the light as soon as you leave a room. Or make your life more romantic and use more candles!
- Regulate your heating  
Winter can be harsh, but maybe 20 degrees and a second hoodie would do, too instead of heating the whole flat up to 30 degrees.

## Travel

Last but not least we're at the travel-part. We obviously all love to travel, but especially flying has a really high CO<sub>2</sub>-emission. So when you're going on your next vacation, maybe also try to consider the alternatives like taking the bus, the train or even carsharing.

But of course, sometimes there's just no other way to get to your destination than flying – on nearly every homepage where you can book flights, you can tick the box that compensates the CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions by donating to different projects. The feeling of knowing that there's a tree growing while you're on vacation might already pay you the extra 1 or 2 Euros of cost. :)

Alright then, so we're preaching to act and life sustainable- but how did we implement it in ExCo at BOKU?

The word sustainability is, without a doubt, the one you hear the most once you start studying at BOKU Vienna. So we tried to face the challenge and spread it to you guys.

During the planning of ExCo we tried to make us use the amazing „Wiener Linien“ – the public transport system in Vienna – as much as possible and keep the cars in the carpark. Let's go, mission low emission!

We're using organic and local food, to keep our CO<sub>2</sub>-footprint during this week as low as possible and support our Austrian agriculture.

As you might have spotted already, all of you are now proud owners of a re-usable glass bottle, which gets you in touch with our remarkable and super refreshing „Wiener Wasser“ (viennese water) and is reducing the plastic waste at ExCo at the same time.

Same for the re-usable plates, cutlery and mugs we're using for our coffee breaks.

Our ÖH-BOKU bags, which you got as goodie, are made from Fairtrade and organic cotton.

So you managed to come to the end of this sustainability-list. We're sure that there're millions of other things you can do to contribute to more sustainability in this world. But these might be the most important and the ones we managed to realise during this event :).

**These are some wise guiding words which are rooted in our very own behaviour. You are free to use/try/change them, but together we can change the world.**

Disclaimer: This brochure should not be mistaken as must to how to live your life, but it should provide a good overview to how you can help the environment to be more sustainable.

**But what's most important: enjoy your life and do what makes you happy <3**