

# Initiative Proposal Sustainability Fund



21st December 2018

## Introduction

Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important topic in today's society. Tilburg University, as a public institution, should play a leading role in making students aware of the importance of this issue. As of now, the university has a Green Office Initiative and a Program Manager Sustainability in order to implement more sustainable projects at Tilburg University. However, in a recent Front Forum evening we hosted, it became apparent that there is still a lot of room for improvement on this topic. In this initiative proposal we will introduce a new concept that will accelerate the process of becoming a more sustainable university.

## Idea

The idea is to establish a Sustainability Fund at Tilburg University that will encourage divisions and associations to partake in sustainable projects at the campus. The fund will consist of two separate areas; one focussed on university divisions and one focussed on associations that are linked to the university.

Because divisions often don't have funds reserved for sustainable projects in their general budget, these projects tend to be set aside or delayed. With the establishment of a fund, the university will assist in the financing of projects and speed up the process of becoming a more sustainable university. Divisions can apply for funding if they have a concrete idea for sustainable investment and an accompanying cost overview statement. After an assessment, the funding will either be awarded or rejected. In the case of rejection, it is asked that there is a clear explanation as to why no money will be made available. Assessment can be done in cooperation with the Green Office Initiative and Sustainability Program Manager..

Associations such as study- and student associations will be encouraged to act in a sustainable manner by applying a system similar to the internationalization fund. If they can demonstrate that they are actively undertaking action to for example reduce waste, create awareness or limit their ecological footprint, associations can apply for grants to financially support these initiatives. Furthermore, discussions, best practices, and information sessions should be hosted which delegates of associations can join. The pilot concerning Internationalisation grants has proven to be very successful and resulted in the addition of 100 extra grants (UR2291). This shows that financial incentives can have a big impact on the behaviour of associations. Therefore, we expect that the establishment of a sustainability grant system will have a similar impact.

Front has taken up an initiative together with TiGEAK in which all associations are invited to join in the discussion about sustainability. This discussion will be documented in a memo and will be submitted to the TiGEAK meeting. This way, concrete agreements can be made about taking the first steps in becoming more sustainable. If an association wishes to take more steps in this, they can apply for further grants.

### **Suggested Construction**

As stated above, the fund will be divided in two separate areas. Beneath is a proposal for a potential construction.

#### **Eligible parties**

Only associations and divisions that are formally linked to Tilburg University will be able to apply for a grant.

#### **Eligibility of projects**

It is vital that projects are properly assessed on their contribution to a more sustainable environment. One way of ensuring this is their compatibility with the Sustainable Development Goals, drafted by the United Nations. This does not only include goals to become a greener university, but also ambitions to strive for equality and a conscious approach to the impact certain choices have. These SDG's have also been included in the university's Strategic Plan as an inspirational framework towards a more sustainable university.

Also, the amount of money requested in the application should be proportional to the total budget of a division.

The assessment of projects can be done by a specially appointed project group that is responsible for the fund. Whenever projects bear a large impact on the university as a whole, the Executive Board should be included in the decision process. Also, Green Office Initiative and the Sustainability Program team can be included in the decision process.

#### **Origin of funds**

The size of the total fund is of course up for discussion. However, there are multiple sources that can sponsor a sustainability fund. One source could be the returns of paid parking at the campus. This initiative was submitted as a means to discourage the use of motorized vehicles. In this proposal, it was suggested that the returns could be invested in Green Office Initiative. However, a second option would be to direct the returns towards a sustainability fund. This way, the parking fees that students and employees pay will flow back to them through sustainable projects at the university or within their associations. This way, travelling by car will be discouraged while at the same time sponsoring sustainable projects.

### Distribution of funds

The actual ratio between the two areas will have to be analyzed upon setting the total capacity of the fund. Factors that play a role can be the height of the grant, the amount of grants available and the available funds at university level.

### Potential Issues

The installment of such a fund comes with potential issues and risks. One of the greatest risks is the misallocation of funds. There should be strict control as to where the money is spent and as to what the motives of applying parties are. In order to enforce this, the application procedure and motive check should be proportional to the scale of the project. Smaller projects need a less thorough examination whereas larger projects require a more extended review.

A way of managing this could be the installment of a threshold system for divisions where projects below a certain investment requirement have a less complicated application procedure. This could mean that the smaller projects only need the approval of an appointed fund board while larger projects will have to be approved by the Executive Board as well. This could also be an effective way to shield smaller projects from long bureaucratic decision making. This would make it more appealing for divisions to move quickly.

For associations, a condition to receiving grants could be the writing of a mandatory report on how the money was spent and what steps have been taken concerning sustainability. This will discourage associations to apply for grants without a solid plan.

For both divisions and associations, strict follow-ups and evaluations should be held to ensure that the money is spent on sustainable projects.

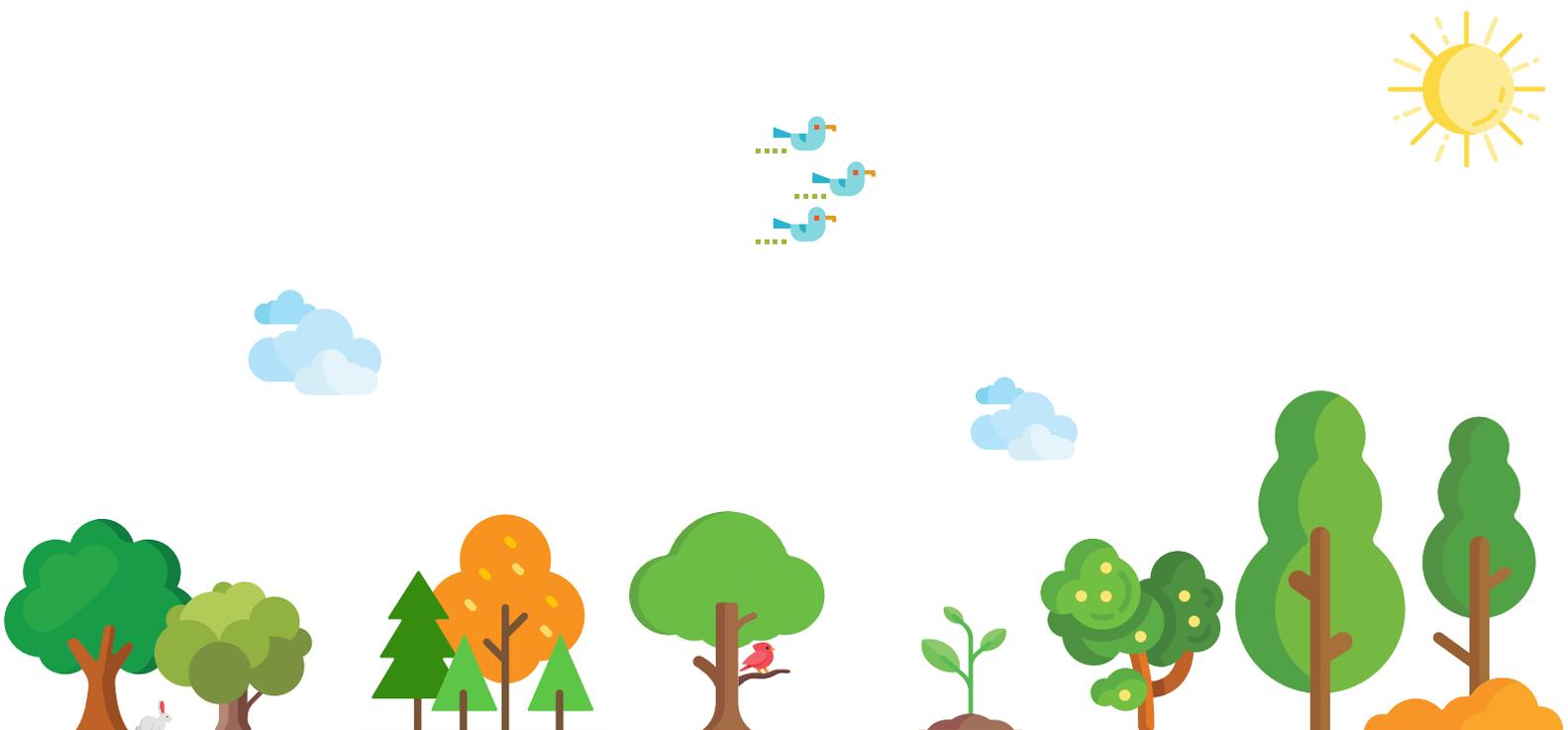
Another potential risk is that associations or divisions will start budgeting with fund contributions in mind. In this situation, those parties will not be motivated to pay more attention to sustainability in their long-term budgeting process. Therefore, we need to look into ways of motivating divisions to adjust their future budgets by taking sustainability into account. This will not only relieve the annual pressure on the fund, but will also lead to more efficient budgeting.

Also, there is a risk that such a fund will run out of money or cease to exist. Even in this case, we hope to have made an impact on the general vision and mindset of divisions and associations. In the end, this initiative is about stimulating sustainability and becoming more conscious of the SDG's.

## Conclusion

We would like to ask the Executive Board to enter dialogue with the sustainability division and Green Office Initiative to assess the feasibility of a Sustainability Fund. We think such a fund would help underline the university's ambition to move up the ranks in terms of sustainability. We think the plan has a high chance of success. Considering the positive impact that the internationalisation grants have made, we also think this fund will incentivize associations to become more sustainable.

With this initiative we hope to make both university divisions and associations more aware of sustainability in the long-term.



# Appendix



# Sustainable Development Goals Overview



<b>1</b> NO POVERTY 	<b>2</b> ZERO HUNGER 	<b>3</b> GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	<b>4</b> QUALITY EDUCATION 	<b>5</b> GENDER EQUALITY 	<b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 
<b>7</b> AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	<b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 	<b>9</b> INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	<b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	<b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	<b>12</b> RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 
<b>13</b> CLIMATE ACTION 	<b>14</b> LIFE BELOW WATER 	<b>15</b> LIFE ON LAND 	<b>16</b> PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 	<b>17</b> PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	