



Sustainability Protocol V2.0



Sustainability Protocol

This protocol was first drawn up in the year 2020-2021, under Board Van Wetten, written by Commissioner of Promotion and Sponsorship Nina van de Voort. It was last updated by Charlotte van Brakel in 2024-2025 under Board Twisk.

This protocol is created to ensure that SIB-Utrecht remains a sustainable association, to reduce our ecological footprint as an association and to do our part in battling the climate crisis. This protocol contains guidelines on keeping activities eco-friendly, sustainable merchandising, and other ways in which SIB might be able to help out the city of Utrecht in the field of sustainability. This protocol has partially been drawn up using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as introduced in 2016.

SIB-Utrecht should always strive to do her part in reducing her ecological footprint, to ensure the future of the world. Though we may be a small organization, every little bit helps.



Social activities

The number one way in which SIB-Utrecht can make an impact with regards to the SDGs is target 12: responsible consumption and production, especially in regards to social activities and trips.

General activities

SIB has some recurring activities, like our lectures, our symposium and our trips. For these activities, we try to re-use a lot of materials. For example: nametags of committee members are kept safe to use for multiple years. When we organise activities where visibility is important, we give organising committees shirts that they can wear for the particular activity and hand it in to us after. Items to show visibility of the board are also name-less and can be used for multiple years, even after the board has changed.

Food-related activities

Throughout the year, SIB-Utrecht organises a significant amount of so-called “food-related activities” (for lack of a better word), such as Meals&Mingles and barbecues. Especially barbecues can cause a lot of waste. We always ask attendees to bring their own cutlery for these types of activities. This way, there is no waste in regards to paper plates and cups. The board or organising committee also brings cups, plates and cutlery that is stored in the boardroom, all of which is reusable, for the attendees who forget to bring something. The hardest part to keep sustainable during these events is the amount of food that is bought and/or ordered in advance, since you cannot order too little or people might not get enough food, but ordering too much might lead to too many leftovers. To avoid this, it is important to know how many people will be attending exactly, so food can be ordered accordingly. In order to accommodate for this, a sign-up sheet is used and closed in advance, so the organising committee and/or board has enough time to do the groceries accordingly. If and when there are still leftovers: any unopened food is returned and any opened food is given away to attending students.

Since Board Schreurs (2022-2023) SIB's policy has been to never provide meat at SIB-activities. All of our activities are vegetarian and have vegan options to choose from. We feel this way we can give a sustainable example to our students.

Travel

SIB-Utrecht takes four trips a year (the September Camp, the Fall Introduction Trip, the Spring Introduction Trip, and the week-long study trip). Some of these trips go to places within the Netherlands, others go to other countries. Though going far away can be very exciting, airplane travel is a big source of pollution. As an association we have thus decided to only travel by train, and in some cases by bus. Train travel is widely available through European railway networks such as Railnet and Interrail, which can take people to all over Europe. A possible way to still make it affordable, as train travel can be quite expensive, is to book accommodation with a partner of the train line that is planned on traveling with, as this sometimes leads to big discounts. There also exists the possibility of looking into group discounts. Another way to reduce the cost of travel is by booking in advance; this has meant we have started up committees earlier to save money.

(Paper) Communication

During the year, the board sends out many things to its members, including birthday cards, Christmas cards and the SIB-Link. These are all very nice to receive, but might also very well end up in the trash for some members. Thus, since Board Schreurs, all birthday cards were sent via email. The SIB-link, our quarterly magazine is sent digitally unless members sign-up to receive the magazine physically.



The Christmas cards are still sent physically. We have however stopped using envelopes and have started using a more sustainable company to print the cards.

Promotion

Since the rise of social media, promotion has been very effective online, limiting the use of paper promotion such as flyers and posters. However, physical/paper promotion is still an effective tool for recruiting more members to the association. The use of posters has been a debated topic within the association, and have on and off been used by various boards. Though it does generally cause waste (flyers might be thrown into the trash immediately, posters can be a one-time use product only), when deciding to use paper promotion there are ways to at least go about it in the least wasteful way possible.

Most promotional materials can be printed on recycled or biodegradable paper. This does cost more than regular paper, but is not outrageously expensive. Our partner Drukbedrijf, with whom we have a 10%-discount deal, offers printing on recycled and biodegradable paper. We use this for all of our promotional materials. In Board Van Duifhuizen (2023-2024) timeless flyers and posters were designed, so they could be used for a couple of years instead of throwing flyers out after one event.

Merchandising

Merchandise is a great promotional asset, given that it increases brand awareness, and is a fun way to connect members to the association. However, it is also a difficult field to make sustainable, as merchandising can become very expensive. In the past, merchandise has been ordered in bulk; this usually makes it a lot cheaper, and thus more affordable for members. However, this has led to many products gathering dust in the storage room, as members are sometimes no longer interested in buying them.

Board Twisk (2024-2025) has started making a way through old merchandise by repurposing old items and recycling them. We have also organised a clothing swap and will organise an auction to make sure old materials will get a beautiful new home for a small price. This way we promote a circular economy for our members.

Instead of buying new merchandise each year, Board Twisk has first gauged interest to see what type of merch members would buy and for which price. This has proven to be a more sustainable way of designing and buying merchandise.

The merchandise that is currently bought by the board or by committee members has to be from a sustainable brand. This has been the policy since Board Van Dorp (2021-2022). This goes for t-shirts, sweaters, mugs etc.

Other ways to be sustainable

SIB-Utrecht is always open to learn about sustainability. We have thus attended many meetings by the Green Office from the University of Utrecht and the Hogeschool Utrecht. At these meetings we meet with other boards and discuss what they do to make their association more sustainable.

One of the fruitful things that has come from this in the last year, is the marketplace for exchanging material between associations. We utilise this online platform to showcase materials that we do not use year round and that other associations can use for free. We also use this platform to borrow materials like decoration so we do not have to buy extra. This promotes sustainability for all associations involved.