



# Sustainability Report 2022

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# 01

## Introduction



In the years 2020 and 2021, UniDistance Suisse set itself the goal of establishing the subject of «sustainable development» firmly within the organisational structure and of taking measures to raise awareness. In 2022, the focus was then placed more on the central strategic theme (or «pillar») of empowerment.

In November 2022, the group of experts on accreditation visited us in order to verify fulfilment of the conditions imposed. In their report, they recorded the following regarding the condition of sustainable development:

«The group of experts was able to satisfy itself that UniDistance Suisse has both defined goals and areas of responsibility and introduced measures to implement them. It emphasises that the subject of sustainability is present – not just purely in terms of space with the new building – and UniDistance Suisse has already achieved and implemented a relatively large amount in a short period of time. The foundation stone has been laid, there is a strategy and goals in place which are being implemented. The standard has therefore been achieved. This should be stressed unambiguously, albeit some of the goals that have been set tend to appear vague. The experts attest to UniDistance Suisse having further big potential for development in this sphere but judge the «inventory» to be a sound basis on which to promote sustainability in teaching still further, which they consider to be a primary mission. This should be built upon in order to achieve even more ambitious goals. The experts also confirm UniDistance Suisse in its determination to continue promoting the subject in the case of new appointments – as it has already done. UniDistance Suisse should bear in mind the development of the Specialist Department. At present, it is combined with the QM Department. This doubling-up should not result in any weakening of one or other sphere. The subject of «numérique responsable» (responsible digitalisation / digital literacy) also offers further great potential. There, UniDistance Suisse is in a unique position to promote and develop a new area of focus. The fact that the subject is being dealt with and handled beyond faculty boundaries also, ultimately, contributes towards strengthening the idea of sustainability within the institution. The groups of experts consider the condition to have been met.»

In the Plan of Action 2027 for the University (Higher Education Institution/HEI) Development Plan, the focus is now being placed on the contribution of UniDistance Suisse to promoting the sustainable development of society and of the institution itself.

# 02

## Sustainability strategy - 2021



### Status of implementation of the strategy for sustainable development 2021

The strategy for sustainable development 2021 is guided by the three pillars «Raise Awareness», «Empower» and «Support». In order to achieve the goals, 14 measures were specified.

At the end of 2022, it was possible to declare twelve measures to have been concluded, while two are still in the realisation phase. By implementing these measures, UniDistance Suisse was able to lay down the responsibilities within the institution, create a sustainability Department as contact point for matters of concern around sustainable development and raise the profile through its own platform on the new UniDistance Suisse website. Strategic cooperation initiatives, appointments of new professors and lecturers and the content of the teaching make a substantial contribution towards promoting sustainable development within UniDistance Suisse.

Incorporating a sustainability and environmental management system into the existing management system and promoting, encouraging and supporting student activities continue to be on the list of priorities of the Sustainable Development Department.

# 03

## Sustainability focal points of UniDistance Suisse



UniDistance Suisse identified focal points which are of central importance to running a university and the character of UniDistance Suisse as a distance learning institution in order to document the sustainable development of the institution.

### 3.1 Focus network

#### 3.1.1 Focus Sustainability

The national «Focus Sustainability» centre is a project by students for students and has existed since February 2021. The aim of the project is to create a national network of students, Swiss universities/HEIs and support platforms in order to assist students in championing sustainability effectively. The initial events and opportunities offered to students have been launched and the setting-up of the network, of universities/HEIs and support platforms among others, has been initiated.

UniDistance Suisse has resolved to increase the cooperation with «Focus Sustainability» in the second phase of the project (summer 2022 until winter 2024).

Through university/HEI and student representatives, we have an opportunity to be involved in the second phase of the project and, in that way, to help shape the centre. At the same time, we offer our students a point of contact for questions regarding student engagement in sustainable development. «Focus Sustainability» organises four events per semester in which our students can take part.

#### 3.1.2 ISCN

UniDistance Suisse has applied for membership of the ISCN. However, this has, for the time being, been rejected. The reason for this is that the ISCN Board has, first of all, to stipulate the conditions of admission of distance learning institutions as we are the first distance university institution to have applied for membership.

Outlook for 2023 – In 2023, the EADTU wants to set up a task force to look at the «green campus» concept and work out a vision for the implementation of that concept for university-level distance teaching institutions.

## 3.2 Focus organisation

In 2022, UniDistance Suisse signed the Charter for Equal Pay in the Public Sector. By doing so, it confirms the determination to implement the constitutional principle of equal pay for equal work. Based on this Charter, UniDistance Suisse stands for the following areas of concern:

- Raising awareness of the Swiss Federal Act on Gender Equality (GEA) among our employees with responsibility for setting pay, job grading, recruiting, training/education and career advancement
- Regular reviewing of adherence to equal pay in our own organisation according to recognised standards
- Adherence to equal pay in the context of the public procurement and/or subsidy system or, as the case may be, in the context of procurements through the introduction of control mechanisms
- Information on the concrete results of this commitment, in particular by taking part in the monitoring of the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality.

## 3.3 Focus distance learning system

In 2022, UniDistance Suisse adopted a new teaching strategy. Influenced by experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, the special educational mission of UniDistance Suisse and its own requirement, regarding digitalisation in the sphere of university teaching, to be innovative, the new teaching strategy was drawn up.

Although the strategy does not make specific reference to sustainable development, it does, with its core points, make an important contribution, in order to continue consolidating the strengths of the institution from the point of view of sustainability, particularly compared to traditional universities.

UniDistance Suisse offers students who would like to complete a university education and, at the same time, need a high degree of flexibility in terms of time and space the possibility of a university course of study. With the new teaching strategy, this flexibility is improved further and, consequently, UniDistance Suisse is made accessible to even more students. In this way, it helps to remove barriers and contributes to lifelong learning.

Thanks to this combination of the academic quality of the studies and a high degree of flexibility for the students, UniDistance Suisse is making a contribution, for society as a whole, to equal opportunities and is, furthermore, helping to overcome the shortage of qualified employees' staff and to make Swiss university education more international.

In addition, UniDistance Suisse qualifies its students for a knowledge-based use of digital media. As the use of digital solutions for attendance-based (in-person) classes, academic discourse, and coursework and final examinations is driven ever further forward, the time, effort and expenditure required for mobility and infrastructure and the emissions associated with them will reduce further.

Therefore, with its new teaching strategy, UniDistance Suisse is also making an important contribution to achieving the 17 goals of Agenda 2030.

## 3.4 Focus Teaching

UniDistance Suisse has updated its inventory of sustainability in teaching, which was drawn up in 2021, and added to the missing courses of study. The inventory shows which modules deal with subjects of the 17 goals of Agenda 2030. The inventory serves on the one hand, to make things clear and, on the other hand, is intended to encourage discussion within the faculties regarding the targeted integration of these subjects into teaching.

The inventory on sustainability in teaching was published on our platform for sustainable development.

[www.unidistance.ch/en/about/sustainability/what-we-do](http://www.unidistance.ch/en/about/sustainability/what-we-do)

## 3.5 Focus research

The ever-progressing strengthening of its own academy and the associated appointments are resulting in UniDistance Suisse increasingly serving main research interests which enable it to contribute to achieving the 17 goals of Agenda 2030.

Representing the many research priorities, Prof. Dr. Géraldine Coppin, Prof. Dr. Manuel Grieder and Prof. Dr. Nicolas Bueno are introduced briefly here.

The Food & Human Behavior Lab of Prof. Dr. Géraldine Coppin from the Faculty of Psychology carries out laboratory research into the psychological and cerebral mechanisms underlying the numerous decisions that we make every day in connection with food.

In the process, they study food preferences and selection in healthy people as well as in people who are overweight or suffering from obesity, patients (male and female) with type-1 diabetes and people suffering from an olfactory and/or gustatory dysfunction. Psychological methods and functional magnetic resonance tomography images are used in this.

Building on theoretical models and empirical findings from economics, management and psychology, Prof Dr. Manuel Grieder from the Faculty of Economics examines, among other things by means of experimental methods, current research topics of the organisational and environmental economy from the perspective of behavioural economics. The latest papers research, for example, the distributional effects of green standard contracts on the electricity market or how the form of a CO2 tax influences intrinsic motivation and, therefore, the effectiveness of the tax in reducing the consumption of CO2-intensive goods and services. In addition, his research considers the subject of behaviour in organisations and in markets. This concerns, for example, how cooperation initiatives between partners can be favoured, unethical behaviour avoided, and sustainable decisions and behaviours encouraged.

The main research areas of Prof. Dr. Nicolas Bueno from the Faculty of Law are on economic and social rights, business and human rights, law and political economy and on globalisation and sustainable development. His research papers on law and economic globalisation have been published in academic journals such as the International Labour Review, the Business and Human Rights Journal, the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities and the Journal of World Investment and Trade. In his current project, «The Economic Ideologies of Work and Labour Rights», he develops a post-market argument for international labour law.

Further information on the subject-related research of UniDistance Suisse can be found here: [www.unidistance.ch/en/research/researchers](http://www.unidistance.ch/en/research/researchers).

## 3.6 Focus energy

### Electricity demand

When calculating the electricity demand of UniDistance Suisse, the electricity actually supplied to the Brig, Siders, Pfäffikon sites and to the premises in Fribourg and the electricity consumption of the server infrastructure were taken into account. Added to this was an estimation of the electricity requirements of the employees working from home and of students in distance education.

When calculating the employees working from home, the following assumptions were made: the employees use the modern equipment made available to them by UniDistance Suisse. This includes a laptop (60 Watt or 0.48 kWh/day), an additional screen (60 Watt or 0.48 kWh/day) and power for light, router, etc. (0.60 kWh/day). The assumption made, therefore, is based on 1.56 kWh per employee and day. It is also assumed that 90% of the employees of UniDistance Suisse do not carry out their work at one of the above-mentioned sites.

For the students, the same equipment was taken as a basis. Furthermore, it is presumed that the students spend 80% of their study time or, in other words, 20 hours per ECTS point, in front of the screen and that 20 ECTS points are gained per semester. Based on these assumptions, each student consumes 160 kWh a year.

This results in the following division of electricity demand at UniDistance Suisse:

	Sites (Brig, Siders, Pfäffikon, Naters, Fribourg) & server infrastructure <sup>2</sup>	Employees working from home (90% of 165.6 FTE)	Students (2,300 students at 800 hours a year)
2021	58'856 kWh	51'848 kWh	368'000 kWh
Change compared to 2020	-6'402 kWh	+7'389 kWh*	+32'000 kWh**

\* In 2020, UniDistance Suisse had a total of 142 FTE (i.e. 90% of 142 FTE)

\*\* In 2020, UniDistance Suisse had 2,100 students

The electricity demand of UniDistance Suisse for 2021 is 58.9 MWh at the sites and 478.7 MWh in total, when the electricity demand of the employees working from home and of the students is considered.

### Heating demand

For the headquarters in Brig, still at the old site at Überlandstrasse 12, for 2021, a heating requirement of 40 MWh was identified. This means that demand increased by 10 MWh compared to that of 2020.

The landlords of the property at Überlandstrasse 12 explained the increased demand as follows: 2021 was a very heating-intensive year. The heating degree days also show this. Heating degree days: heating degree days (HDD) allow conclusions to be drawn about climate-dependent energy consumption for heating and are used to control the heating system. For this, on every day of heating - a day with a daily mean temperature of below 12 degrees Celsius - it is ascertained by how much the measured outside air temperature deviates from the desired inside air temperature of 20 degrees Celsius.

Heating degree days 2020: 3051

Heating degree days 2021: 3350



This is undoubtedly one of the biggest factors in the increase in the heating output. Poor ventilation (home office), windows permanently tilted open, etc. could also have an effect.

These offices were moved, on 1st January 2022, to the modern new campus building in the Rhonesandquartier. It will be interesting to see what effect the new campus will have on the electricity and heating requirements of UniDistance Suisse. These effects will be shown in the 2022 energy balance assessment in the Sustainability Report 2023.

## 3.7 Focus mobility

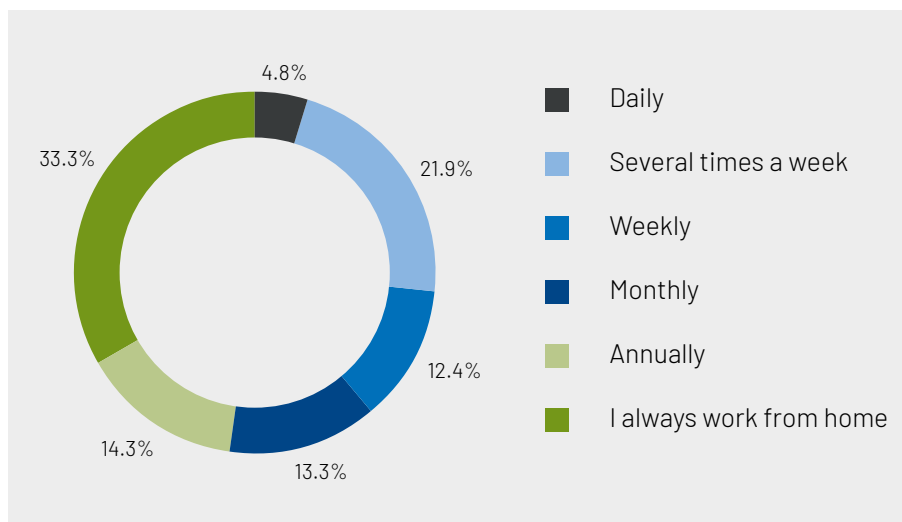
### 3.7.1 Commuter behaviour

As part of the employee satisfaction survey of UniDistance Suisse, the HR Barometer 2022, a survey of the commuter behaviour of the employees was also carried out.

Of the 435 employees asked to take part in the survey, 210 provided details about their commuting behaviour. This corresponds to a participation rate of 48.3%.

#### Question 1:

How many times a week do you commute to your place of work at UniDistance Suisse or are you travelling for UniDistance Suisse? Select the answer which is closest to your behaviour.

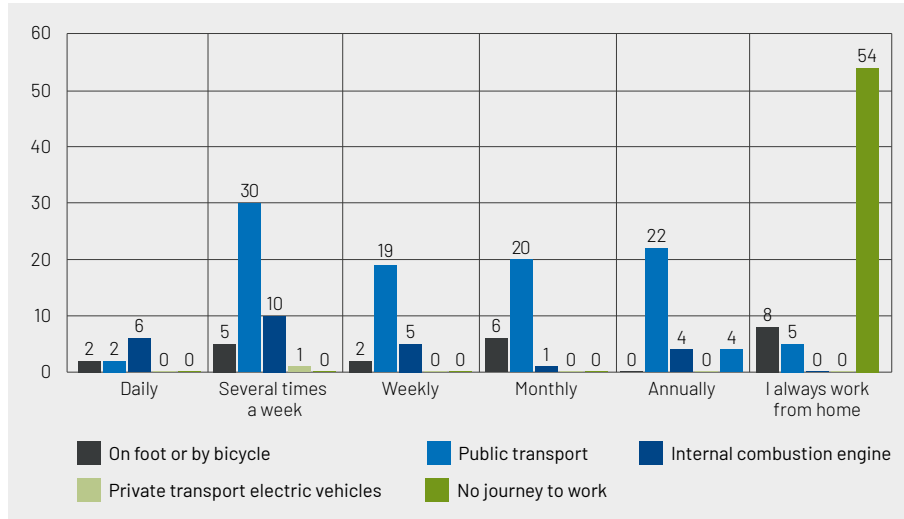


Percentage distribution

The second question ascertained which means of transport the different commuter groups (daily, several times a week, etc.) use to get to work.

**Frage 2:**

How do you cover most of your journey to work?



Number of commuters

**3.7.2 Air travel**

Also affected by the Corona pandemic, in 2021 very few flights were undertaken for UniDistance Suisse. Only two intercontinental flights and one continental flight were accounted for.

**3.8 Focus sustainable engagement**

In 2022, the employees of UniDistance Suisse initiated and took part in two projects which were successfully carried out.

UniDistance Suisse organised two exchange and barter events (swap shops) at the Brig site. In June and November 2022, for two weeks, books, clothing, everyday objects, etc. could be brought in free of charge and any other items required could be taken away. The remaining objects were taken to Brockenhaus, a charitable organisation in Upper Valais.

At the request of the employees, in 2022 UniDistance Suisse signed up for «Bike to Work». The result was a total of six teams from UniDistance Suisse, each with four participants, chalking up a total of 2,716 km on 563 «Velo days» (bicycle days).

