



ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2023

VASARA, STUDENT ORGANIZATION OF GEOLOGY STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Aaro Sariola & Maija Havusela
02/2023

1. INTRODUCTION

Vasara, student organization of geology students in the University of Helsinki, carries a big responsibility in its activities to be environmentally friendly and encourages its members to make sustainable decisions both in the organization's activities and in everyday life. This plan has been made to instruct every member of the organization for making environmentally friendly choices in 2023.

2. GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN

The goal of the environmental plan is to minimize environmental stress and encourage members towards more sustainable choices. This plan lists environmental instructions based on sustainable development goals for different sectors and gives responsibilities for adhering to these instructions. Every year the plan gives new goals, to which the organization aims at by showing goal-directed example to its members.

The first environmental plan was created by evaluating the organization's activities at that time. Prevailing practices were evaluated by considering the sustainable development principles, taking into consideration the three dimensions of it: ecological, economical and social sustainability. Practices that adhered to the sustainable development goals were documented to the plan and substitutive alternatives were considered to replace practices that required change. The impacts of alternative ways of acting were evaluated beforehand by considering their advantages and disadvantages.

This environmental plan takes into account the goals of HYY's Sustainable Development Plan and HYY's Environmental Committee's Environmental Instructions for Organizations.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICERS

For the year 2023 there are two environmental officers in Vasara: Aaro Sariola and Maija Havusela. They oversee environmental affairs and supervise that Vasara abides by the environmental plan and if needed, they update the plan. The environmental officers cooperate with the other officers and board of Vasara and the HYY's Environmental Committee. They have attended an environmental training organized by the Environmental Committee. They help the other officers and board to fulfill actions regarding the environment mentioned in this plan.

4. STUDENT FACILITIES OF VASARA

Vasara has two student rooms in the Kumpula campus: Kasvis and Suppa. Kasvis is located in the C wing of the department of geology and geography. Kasvis is the main hangout place and coffee room of Vasara. Suppa is a student room shared with the geography students MaO that is located at the end of valopiha. Suppa is mainly used as a meeting or study room.

4.1. Conserving energy

The janitor of Kumpula campus switches off the lights in the evening in the student rooms if they have been left on. The prevailing rule is that the last person leaving Kasvis switches off the lights. The lights of Suppa are switched off always when the room is empty. When Vasara uses other facilities (e.g. Klusteri), the last person leaving always switches off the lights.

Energy is always used sparingly. For instance, when arranging parties, the dishwasher is always run in full load and when washing dishes by hand, as little water as possible is used, however considering hygiene issues. Domestic appliances that are not used are recommended to be detached from the power socket and they should always be switched off when not used. In winter, the facilities are not ventilated during the coldest season, so that heat isn't lost.

4.2. Waste

The primary goal of Vasara is to minimize the amount of waste. The generation of unnecessary waste is prevented by for example avoiding vain printing and disposable dishes. The trash of the student rooms is recycled as follows: mixed waste, bio waste, bottles and cans (also ones without a deposit), glass, cardboard and plastic. The recycling bins must have clear signs for which trash they are meant for. The cleaning service of the University empty the mixed and biowaste, other recyclable trash is taken regularly to the downstairs of Physicum by the Kasvis officers (Antti Tynjälä and Anna Pajunen).

The fridge in Kasvis is checked regularly, so that all the food that has gone off, will be discarded. Leftover food can be used for example in meeting servings or offered to members. Everyone marks their own food, otherwise the food is considered shared. If marked food is several months old, it will be discarded (if gone off) or used in Vasara's servings. At the end of every year the foods in cupboards will be systematically checked.

4.3. Selling coffee

Only sustainable and ecological coffee made by Fair Trade is purchased to Kasvis (appendix 1). Coffee filters are bleach-free, entirely biodegradable and sustainably certified by for example FSC or the Nordic Swan. Coffee milk should be vegan, such as oat or soy milk. Members use their own mugs for drinking coffee or tea. There are also shared dishes and mugs in Kasvis that the members can use and wash after using them. Disposable dishes, mugs or cutlery are not used.

4.4. Student room Suppa

There is only a small container for mixed waste in Suppa. Recyclable trash from Suppa is brought to the recycling containers in Kasvis.

5. PURCHASES

Vasara abides by the sustainable development principles in every purchase and evaluates the environmental impacts of the purchase. In bigger purchases the board supervises the adherence of the principles. The purchases should be secondhand, for example from recycling centres. Defective electronic appliances should primarily be fixed, otherwise the environmental and Kasvis officers see that it will be recycled in an appropriate way.

6. VASARA'S ACTIVITIES

6.1. Meetings

Food served at the meetings is vegan and local and organic food, fruits from the latest harvest and products from Fair Trade are favored within the limits of the budget. The serving of the meeting is planned, so that redundant waste is not produced, and costs are reasonable. Disposable dishes aren't used in the meetings (section 4.3). Meeting documents are only in digital form.

6.2. Publications

Vasara's member newsletter *Holoseenin sanomat* was moved entirely in digital form in 2019. In 2023 environmentally related current topics are written in the newsletter.

6.3. Sauna evenings and other social evenings

Hosts and hostesses prepare the servings of social evenings. When purchasing ingredients, sustainable development principles must be taken into account and consider the amount reasonable for participants. Purchases are budgeted so that it is possible to favor Fair Trade or Nordic Swan - certified products. Servings are vegan, considering allergies. If possible, leftover food is utilized, for example by using ResQ, Fiksuruoka or Matsmart.

Recycling is always carried out depending on the recycling possibilities of different facilities. If possible, disposable dishes aren't used. If disposable dishes have to be used, they should be recyclable materials (e.g. cardboard mugs).

6.4. Parties

If the servings of the parties are executed by Vasara, the same issues are taken into consideration as in the previous sections. Servings are always vegan, considering allergies too. Bottles and cans used in parties are collected in trash bags, regardless of whether they have a deposit or not. Party organizers or if agreed, the hosts of Vasara, are responsible for recycling these. Vasara's parties are mainly organized in Alina hall, which is equipped with recycling bins. The bins are emptied in the basement, which is familiar to all of those who have attended the Alina hall training.

Decoration materials are secondhand, for example Vasara's washable table clothes, Vasara's decoration lights or members' own decoration materials. Decoration materials can also be rented, borrowed or self-made. In theme dressing secondhand costumes are favored, for example dresses acquired from flea market. Members can also swap costumes with each other.

If Vasara is the host organization, Vasara will ask invited organizations to favor immaterial gifts. Vice versa, if Vasara is invited to another organization's anniversary party, Vasara will give immaterial gifts. It can for example be a donation made to a charity organization made in the name of the host organization. Song books are recommended to be digital.

6.5. Transportation

When travelling to events, public transportation should be favored. If Vasara arranges an excursion abroad or for example a cruise, the emissions should be compensated by investing in an appropriate compensation target, for example preserving forests or mires. Always when using a plane or a ship, another transportation option should be considered. For example, the excursion destination could be in Europe along train connections or instead of a cruise a “tram cruise” could be an option.

6.6. Arranging events

The environmental officers take part in planning the events and supervise that the events are planned and organized according to the criteria mentioned in this environmental plan. Event organizers should always be in touch with the environmental officers, if they notice some lack regarding environmental issues.

7. EXECUTION, MONITORING AND DEVELOPMENT

Vasara’s environmental plan is shared on the Vasara’s website so that it is available for every member and officer, so that they can take part in developing the plan. The environmental officers will share an electric link to the members, through which members can suggest ideas to improve Vasara’s environmental friendliness. At the end of the year the officers of Vasara will gather with the board to discuss how the goals of the plan have been achieved and how the environmental issues could be improved in the future.

The environmental officers monitor the execution of the plan according to guidelines mentioned in section 3. The environmental plan is updated in the beginning of year 2024 the next time. If necessary, the environmental officers will be in touch with the HYY’s Environmental Committee.

8. OFFICER-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions for officers briefly. Officer-specific instructions will be updated straight to the Vasara’s officer instructions. Every officer must attend the environmental training arranged by the environmental officers based on the HYY’s Environmental Committee’s instructions for organizations. Officers can always be in touch with the environmental officers if they need help in taking environmental issues into consideration.

8.1. Student representatives

The student representatives of the Department Council of the Department of Geosciences and Geography won’t print the agendas and appendixes of the meetings of the Department or Faculty. All the documents are digital. According to current meeting policies it is allowed to have for example a telephone, tablet or laptop with which it is possible to read the agenda or other important documents.

8.2. Board

The number of papers that Vasara can print is 50 pages per year. Important documents, such as operating plans and reports, financial statements, agendas, meeting minutes and other official documents will be digital and uploaded to Vasara’s webpage. If printing is required, Vasara has printing paper that is thinner than normal printing paper.

When training new officers, the guidelines of this environmental plan must be presented to the

officers. In the trainings of Alina hall and Christina Regina the appropriate recycling must be presented. Hosts, hostesses and organizers of sists or anniversary parties must attend necessary trainings. Trainings are also recommended for board members, so that they can help or substitute officers in case of special situations.

8.3. Hosts and hostesses

Trash of sauna evenings arranged in Sivistys is recycled in bins found in Christina Regina recycling point. In parties every bottle and can is collected, regardless if they have a deposit or not.

Servings will be vegan, see section 6. Primarily servings are self-made. Hosts and hostesses can ask for help in email lists or WhatsApp groups. Usually help is available when requested. Convenience food is not favored. Unnecessary packaging is avoided and in shops long-lasting bags are used (e.g. Ikea bags). In events trash is recycled according to each facility's instructions. For that, necessary trainings have to be attended (Alina hall and Christina Regina). If possible, disposable dishes are not used.

8.4. Kasvis officers

Kasvis officers take care that students keep the room clean. Recycling is executed according to guidelines mentioned in section 4.2. They also supervise that the coffee bought to Kasvis fulfills the criteria mentioned in section 4.3 and that the fridge is not filled with food that has gone off. Kasvis officers also make sure that broken electronic appliances and hazardous waste are recycled in an appropriate place. Empty batteries are collected in the bureau under the computer desk. At the moment the only gadgets that Vasara has that use batteries are the megaphone and radio phones, so hazardous waste is rarely generated.

8.5. Tutor officer

All material that is shared with new students should be in digital form, if possible. Waste and recycling are taken into consideration when arranging Freshers' events. It is important to show example to Freshers about environmental awareness and sustainability, so that new students learn the principles of sustainable events and their signification right away when starting studies.

8.6. Career, excursion and culture officers

When arranging excursions, public transportation is favored, if it is possible. Especially in the capital area public transportation is functional. If excursions are arranged further, bus and train connections are favored. Within Finland planes are not used. If the excursion destination is abroad and a plane or a ship must be used, the emissions are compensated (read section 6.5).

If the institute or organization arranging the excursion serves food, they are informed that servings should be vegan, if possible.

8.7. Sports officers

Outdoor events should be arranged regularly, for example in parks. Outside sports are a good way to be in nature and avoid energy consumption indoors.

8.8. Leppätalo and Klusteri officers

Leppätalo and Klusteri officers make sure that Klusteri has diverse recycling containers. They can bring up possible deficiencies in the Leppätalo committee's meetings.

APPENDIX 1

EXAMPLE

Example #1: Vasara sells coffee in the student room Kasvis. Coffee consumption is quite abundant, so it is good to note what kind of coffee is purchased to Kasvis.

Economical sustainability:

Coffee brands should not be too expensive for Vasara. Coffee should be sold without making a loss but so that coffee wouldn't cost too much.

Ecological sustainability:

Does the producer have environmental certificates, and if it does, are they internationally accepted or are they just greenwashing brands that in reality do not fulfill enough criteria for being environmentally responsible.

Social sustainability:

What kind of reputation does the coffee producer have? Is there for example a danger that it has been using child labour or that the working conditions are bad within the coffee farmers? Do we know anything about the farmers, do they get a reasonable payment for the ingredients or a reasonable salary?

Coffee brands in Kasvis:

In 2023, the coffee brand Vasara uses is Löfbergs or Paulig. Löfbergs is a Swedish coffee producer that has a broad selection of organically farmed and Fair Trade products, and the availability in shops is good. Löfbergs was nominated for getting the environmental award of the Nordic Council in 2015, because it has executed a comprehensive sustainable development strategy that covers the whole production of the coffee chain from "bean to pan". The coffee is reasonably priced and won't create pressure to lift the price of coffee in Kasvis.

Paulig uses only Fair Trade, Organic or UTZ certified coffee in its products or coffee bought from partnership programs that have been certified as being responsible. Paulig has over the years helped more than 100 000 coffee farmers through its partnership programs. Currently partnership programs exist in 12 countries and the newest programs have been established in Africa and Southern or Latin America. The partners of Paulig are for example International Coffee Partners, Coffee & Climate, Fair Trade and coffee exporting companies.