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# 1. Introduction

Task 6.2 focuses on embedding sustainability into the operations of the AURORA Universities. Its primary objectives include the development of best practices for sustainable operations, the establishment of a unified sustainability monitoring framework, and fostering a culture of sustainability awareness across all AURORA Universities. By addressing these goals, Task 6.2 aims to position AURORA as a leader in sustainable higher education practices, setting an example for other university alliances worldwide.

During the first phase of AURORA, significant groundwork was laid to integrate sustainability into campus operations. The efforts were centred on creating actionable strategies and preparing for a unified approach to monitoring sustainability across the network. A key milestone of this phase was the development and adoption of the **AURORA Sustainable Campus Action Plan**. This strategic document outlined the primary areas of action, articulated the collective commitment of the AURORA Universities, and provides a roadmap for achieving sustainability goals.

Building on this foundation, the [AURORA Common Footprint Reduction Plan](#) was developed and adopted. This plan expanded on the principles outlined in the [AURORA Sustainable Campus Action Plan](#), translating them into concrete actions aimed at reducing the environmental footprint of the AURORA Universities. It also laid the groundwork for the implementation of a common sustainability monitoring system, which was envisioned as a key deliverable for the second phase of AURORA. These efforts underscored the Alliance's commitment to addressing pressing environmental challenges and aligning with global sustainability frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the current phase of AURORA, Task 6.2 builds on the achievements of the first phase, transitioning from planning to implementation and scaling up efforts to achieve tangible results. The primary goals for this phase are twofold:

## 1. Introducing a Common Sustainability Monitoring Framework

A unified monitoring system is being developed to track sustainability performance across all AURORA Universities. This framework will enable the collection, analysis, and comparison of sustainability metrics, providing a clear picture of progress and areas for improvement.

## 2. Raising Awareness and Fostering a Culture of Sustainability

Beyond operational changes, Task 6.2 emphasizes the importance of engaging the university community—students, faculty, and staff—in sustainability efforts. Raising awareness is seen as a critical step in creating a shared sense of responsibility and inspiring collective action.

To achieve these goals, several initiatives have already been launched. One of the first concrete steps was the design and implementation of the **AURORA Sustainability Survey**. This survey aimed to assess the current state of sustainability monitoring at the AURORA Universities and collect practices. The insights gained from the survey are being used to inform future actions and progress towards the common monitoring and reporting.

Another significant milestone was the organisation of the **AURORA Sustainability Summit**, a flagship event held in May 2025 that brought together stakeholders from across the network. The summit served as a platform for sharing knowledge, showcasing best practices, and fostering collaboration on sustainability initiatives. It also provided an opportunity to celebrate achievements, discuss challenges, and chart a path forward for the alliance's sustainability agenda.

## 2. Description

### **AURORA Sustainability Survey: Establishing a foundation for sustainability monitoring within AURORA**

The development of the **AURORA Sustainability Survey** was a collaborative and iterative process carried out by Task Team 6.2 in close coordination with all AURORA Universities throughout 2024. The survey has been designed to establish a robust foundation for future monitoring and to foster the exchange of good practices across the network. The survey aimed to balance the need for high-quality, actionable data with practical considerations of minimizing the workload for participating universities. Achieving this balance required extensive collaboration with sustainability experts and stakeholders from all member institutions. The creation of the AURORA Sustainability Survey was guided by a participatory approach, ensuring that the perspectives and expertise of all AURORA Universities were incorporated. These discussions helped identify the key areas of focus, informed by the priorities outlined in the AURORA Sustainable Campus Action Plan.

The survey was designed to serve two primary purposes:

1. **Establishing a Baseline:** The survey aimed to collect essential data on the current state of sustainability efforts across AURORA Universities. This baseline data would serve as a reference point for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement in subsequent monitoring phases.
2. **Identifying Good Practices:** In addition to quantitative data, the survey sought to capture qualitative insights by documenting successful sustainability initiatives and strategies implemented by member universities. These good practices would be shared across the Alliance to inspire and inform future actions.

The first draft of the survey was developed in summer 2024 and then underwent a review process. All participating universities could give feedback to ensure the survey was comprehensive, relevant, and user-friendly. After incorporating this feedback, the final version of the survey was completed in the fall of 2024. The finalised survey included over 40 questions, organised into thematic areas aligned with the AURORA Sustainable Campus Action Plan (see Annex 1 for the main questions from the survey). These areas included energy efficiency, waste management, sustainable procurement, biodiversity among others.

The baseline survey was official in late 2024 and completed in January 2025, with responses submitted by eight AURORA Universities. The survey responses provided a wealth of information, offering valuable insights into the diverse sustainability landscapes of the participating universities. The results revealed a wide spectrum of progress among the universities, highlighting both strengths and areas for growth. While some institutions demonstrated advanced sustainability practices and well-established frameworks, others are in the earlier stages of their respective sustainability journey. This diversity underscored the importance of a collaborative approach, where universities can learn from one another and leverage shared resources to accelerate their progress.

Despite the differences identified, a common thread emerged: a clear and collective commitment to continuous improvement. The survey responses demonstrated a shared recognition of the importance of sustainability and a willingness to take concrete steps toward achieving the goals outlined in the AURORA Sustainable Campus Action Plan.

The completion of the baseline survey marked a significant milestone. The data collected through the survey serves multiple purposes:

1. **Baseline for monitoring:** The survey results provide a starting point for the development of a common sustainability monitoring framework. This framework will enable AURORA Universities to track their progress over time, identify trends, and measure the impact of their sustainability initiatives. Through repeated annual surveys over the duration of the project we will be able to monitor progress towards sustainability.
2. **Good practices repository:** The qualitative insights gathered through the survey will be compiled into a repository of good practices. This resource will be shared within the network as well as with external stakeholders through the AURORA website, social media and presentations at AURORA conferences. It will serve to facilitate knowledge exchange and inspire innovative approaches to sustainability challenges.
3. **Informed decision-making:** The survey findings offer a data-driven foundation for setting priorities and allocating resources. By understanding the current status and needs of each university, AURORA can tailor its support and initiatives to maximize impact.

Looking ahead, the next steps include:

- **Developing the monitoring framework:** Building on the baseline survey, Task Team 6.2 will work on adapting the AURORA Sustainability Survey in order to use it for progress monitoring.
- **Sharing and scaling good practices:** The repository of good practices will be disseminated throughout the AURORA network and beyond. Member universities will be encouraged to adapt and implement these practices in their own contexts.
- **Sustainability monitoring:** The AURORA sustainability survey will be repeated each year in order to measure progress towards sustainability and therefore contribute to the planned AURORA sustainability report, which will also include updates on progress and recommendations for future actions. Feedback from member universities will be sought to continuously refine the survey.

### **AURORA Sustainability Summit: Engaging the community**

To foster a culture of sustainability within the AURORA Universities and engage the broader AURORA community, significant efforts have been made to involve students, faculty, and administrative staff in sustainability initiatives. These efforts aim to create a shared sense of responsibility and inspire collective action toward achieving the sustainability goals outlined in the AURORA Sustainable Campus Action Plan. A key milestone in these engagement efforts during the first part of the current phase of AURORA was the **AURORA Sustainability Summit**, held at the University of Paris-Est Créteil (UPEC) on May 22, 2025.

The AURORA Sustainability Summit was a flagship event designed to bring together diverse stakeholders from across the AURORA network to exchange ideas, share best practices, and collaborate on advancing sustainability. The summit attracted more than 150 participants, including students, faculty members, administrative staff, and external stakeholders. This broad participation underscored the collective commitment of the AURORA community to addressing global sustainability challenges. The event spanned an entire day, featuring a dynamic program that combined plenary sessions, interactive workshops, and opportunities for networking and collaboration. The summit was structured to provide both inspiration and practical tools, ensuring that participants left with actionable insights and strategies to implement in their own institutions and professional contexts.

The morning sessions of the summit were dedicated to plenary presentations and discussions, which set the tone for the day by highlighting the importance of sustainability and the role of networks like AURORA in driving change. The 1<sup>st</sup> session "Making the Case for Sustainability – Good Practices from AURORA" showcased a series of innovative and impactful sustainability projects from within AURORA. The projects were selected for their potential for replication across the network and their AURORA

context. The session aimed to inspire participants by demonstrating what is possible when sustainability is prioritized and to provide practical examples that attendees could adapt and apply in their own work. The 2<sup>nd</sup> session "The Value of Networks for Advancing Sustainability" focused on the unique role that alliances like AURORA can play in amplifying sustainability efforts. Speakers highlighted how collaboration across institutions enables the sharing of resources, expertise, and best practices, creating a multiplier effect that accelerates progress. Specific examples were provided to illustrate how AURORA's collective approach has already led to tangible outcomes, such as the development of the Common Footprint Reduction Plan and the AURORA Sustainability Survey. The session also explored opportunities for leveraging the network to address emerging challenges, such as climate adaptation and biodiversity loss.

The afternoon program featured a series of interactive workshops, designed to provide participants with practical tools and methods that they could use in their teaching or administrative roles. These workshops emphasised experiential learning and peer-to-peer exchange, creating a dynamic and engaging environment. Workshops included introduction to "The Climate Fresk", an innovative and interactive tool designed to raise awareness about climate change and its underlying causes. Participants worked in small groups to map out the complex relationships between human activities, greenhouse gas emissions, and climate impacts. The activity not only deepened participants' understanding of climate science but also equipped them with a powerful tool to use in their own teaching or community outreach efforts. Similarly, the workshop on "The Biodiversity Fresk" focused on biodiversity and the interconnected factors that contribute to its decline. Participants explored the drivers of biodiversity loss, such as habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change, and discussed strategies for promoting conservation and sustainable practices. The workshop emphasised the importance of integrating biodiversity education into curricula and campus activities.

By bringing together diverse voices and fostering a spirit of collaboration, the AURORA Sustainability Summit has set the stage for transformative change. It exemplifies the power of collective action in addressing global challenges and reaffirms AURORA's commitment to building a sustainable future. The AURORA Sustainability Summit is widely regarded as a success, achieving its goals of raising awareness, building capacity, and fostering collaboration. The summit inspired participants to take a more active role in sustainability efforts, both within their institutions and in their personal lives. The interactive format and diverse range of topics ensured that attendees left with a deeper understanding of sustainability challenges and solutions. The event provided a platform for sharing good practices and innovative ideas, strengthening connections between AURORA Universities.

You will find [here](#) a reflection on the event.

### 3. Discussion of the final outcome

While the work within TT6.2 is progressing as planned, there is no final outcome yet. With the AURORA Sustainability Summit and the baseline of the AURORA Sustainability Survey, important milestones have been achieved, and significant contributions to the next milestones have already been made.

### 4. Conclusion

The AURORA Sustainability Survey represents more than just a data collection exercise—it is a catalyst for change. By establishing a baseline and fostering collaboration, the survey has set the stage for transformative action across the AURORA network. As the alliance moves forward, the insights gained from this initiative will guide its efforts to create greener, more sustainable campuses and contribute to global sustainability goals.

As Task 6.2 progresses, the focus will remain on driving measurable impact and embedding sustainability into the AURORA Universities. Future plans include:

- **Professionalization of the common sustainability monitoring:** The common sustainability monitoring framework will be refined and respective monitoring conducted.
- **Increasing impact through providing good practices:** Collected good practices will be collected and provided as showcases and actionable inputs for all partner Universities.
- **Engaging stakeholders:** Internal and external stakeholder engagement will be strengthened to amplify the impact of AURORA's sustainability efforts and ensure alignment with regional and global sustainability goals.

By pursuing these initiatives, Task 6.2 aims to create a legacy of sustainability within AURORA. The ultimate vision is to transform AURORA Universities into exemplars of sustainable development, where environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic resilience are seamlessly integrated into all aspects of university life.

The AURORA Sustainability Summit marked an important step in advancing sustainability within the AURORA Alliance. The positive feedback from participants has led to discussions about making the summit a repeated event, potentially rotating among AURORA Universities to ensure broad participation and representation. In addition, efforts will be made in order to strengthen community engagement to amplify the impact of AURORA's sustainability initiatives. The outcomes of the summit will be integrated into AURORA's sustainability monitoring framework, ensuring that the insights and ideas generated are translated into measurable actions.

## 5. Annex

### 5.1 Annex 1 – AURORA Sustainability Survey (baseline)

1. Do you calculate your CO<sub>2</sub>-Balance?
2. For which years do you have a CO<sub>2</sub>-Balance?
3. What is your most recent CO<sub>2</sub>-Balance (in t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)
4. Please (shortly) outline the calculation method
5. Remarks regarding your CO<sub>2</sub>-Balance (open issues, boundaries, exclusions, etc.)
6. Do you have targets and measures regarding Buildings & energy efficiency in place?
7. Total amount of energy used for heating (kWh)
8. Total emissions from energy used for heating (t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)
9. Amount of renewable energy used for heating (kWh)
10. Total amount of energy used for cooling (kWh)
11. Total emissions from of energy used for cooling (t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)
12. Amount of renewable energy used for cooling (kWh)
13. Which goals does your university have in the areas of buildings & energy efficiency?
14. Are there any good practices from your university in the area of buildings & energy efficiency you would like to share?
15. Do you have targets and measures regarding energy demand & production in place?
16. Total amount of electricity used (kWh)
17. Total emissions from electricity use (t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)
18. Amount of electricity from renewable sources used (kWh)
19. Amount of electricity from renewable sources produced by your university (kWh)
20. Which goals does your university have in the areas of energy demand and production?
21. Are there any good practices from your university in the area of energy demand and production you would like to share?
22. Do you have a policy or strategy on sustainable mobility?
23. What are your emissions from commuting (staff) (t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)
24. What are your emissions from commuting (students) (t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)
25. What are your emissions from business travel (t CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent)
26. Do you have any measurable goals in the area of mobility?
27. Are there any good practices from your University in the area of mobility you would like to share?
28. Do you have a policy or strategy on the reduction of water use and / or waste sorting / waste reduction?
29. Do you have measurable goals in the area of water, waste water & waste?
30. Are there any good practices from your University in the area of water, waste water & waste you would like to share?
31. Do you have a policy or strategy on sustainable food/sustainable accommodation?
32. Do you have measurable goals in the area of food & accommodation?

33. Are there any good practices from your University in the area of food & accommodation you would like to share?
34. Do you have a policy or strategy on sustainable procurement?
35. Do you have measurable goals in the area of procurement?
36. Are there any good practices from your University in the area of procurement you would like to share?
37. Do you have a policy or strategy on biodiversity?
38. Do you have measurable goals in the area of biodiversity?
39. Are there any good practices from your University in the area of biodiversity you would like to share?
40. Do you have a policy or strategy on accessibility?
41. Do you have measurable goals in the area of accessibility?
42. Are there any good practices from your University in the area of accessibility you would like to share?