

# Joint statement of the Max Planck Sustainability Network and the Network Helmholtz Climate-Neutral on the declaration of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany regarding climate neutrality from September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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**The Max Planck Sustainability Network and the Network Helmholtz Climate-Neutral welcome the declaration of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany from September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 on the goal to achieve climate neutrality of their research activities by 2035. This statement is a crucial first step in the right direction. Now it is essential to develop and implement concrete measures and actions to address this aim and facilitate a sustainable science environment.**

Climate change is one of the largest threats to our livelihood. Political and economic actors and society are obliged to do everything in their power to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement and to restrict global warming to 1.5 degrees. The world has high expectations in science to create suitable solutions. A crucial aspect to these solutions is our research itself. We investigate climate change and its causes, we develop processes to save energy and technologies to store and use renewables, and we analyse the impact of the climate crisis on the economy and society.

At the same time, our research activities often come with a high demand for energy and resources, and they produce substantial greenhouse gas emissions. Our research facilities are heated and commonly run using high air exchange rates. Our high-performance computers and instruments need electricity, our laboratories use large quantities of resources, and our experiments can produce contaminated waste that is hard to dispose of. Moreover, frequent flights to conferences and meetings present a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, a necessity emerges to minimize our emissions and our environmental impact alongside broad changes in society and economy. Employees at universities and research facilities around the world are currently developing practices for sustainable research. The success of these efforts depends strongly on the support and promotion by the leadership of major research institutions. On September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany published a pledge to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from its research processes by 2035.<sup>1</sup>

We, the Max Planck Sustainability Network and the Network Helmholtz Climate-Neutral, explicitly welcome this statement. We offer our support, and we underline the request for a political framework that allows a transition to a sustainable research environment. We would like to emphasize that prompt and effective measures have to be implemented in order to reach the goal of climate neutrality by 2035. We primarily aim towards a reduction of emissions. Compensation should be used only where reduction is not (yet) possible. Detailed proposals on concrete measures to create ecologically sustainable research practices are already available within our Alliance Organisations. For example, the Max Planck Sustainability Network prepared a catalogue of recommendations (CaRe).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/2021/Allianz\\_Klimaneutralitaet\\_13092021.html](https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/2021/Allianz_Klimaneutralitaet_13092021.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nachhaltigkeitsnetzwerk.mpg.de/doi-2021-care>

It is essential that we act quickly and productively. Importantly, several changes could be implemented immediately under the existing legal framework. For other measures, we have to develop action plans now to achieve them in the future.

We call on the leaders of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany to implement changes across the entire spectrum of relevant sectors, including energy, construction and management of research infrastructure, mobility, procurement and disposal, as well as biodiversity. We believe that the following important measures can be realized immediately:

- Development of concrete emission reduction strategies with a binding roadmap to achieve net-zero emissions by 2035, including regular evaluation of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions
- Allocation of human resources for the implementation of the strategies and measures
- Supply of all facilities with energy from renewable sources
- Exploitation of all suitable areas for the installation of photovoltaic systems
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from business trips through the support of virtual meeting formats and low-emission transportation options

As scientific organisations, we gather creative minds from across the world and perform research at the frontiers of knowledge. We therefore believe that we can be courageous to abandon well-worn paths when they are recognized as unsustainable. If we do, we not only mitigate the climate crisis through our scientific discoveries, but we also enhance the credibility and positive impact of our research activities.



*The Max Planck Sustainability Network<sup>3</sup> was founded in May 2019 as an initiative of employees across the Max Planck Society with the aim to support sustainable research. They are engaged in over 40 sustainability groups at individual institutes.*



*The Network Helmholtz Climate-Neutral<sup>4</sup> is an open network of employees across the Helmholtz Association who engage in the transformation of their research facilities towards sustainability. The network was formed as an employee initiative in autumn 2019 with the contribution by members of all 18 Helmholtz Centres.*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nachhaltigkeitsnetzwerk.mpg.de/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://hermann-von-h-klimaneutral.com/>