REFRESH

Green and sustainable global economic improvement at Azerbaijani Universities: renewable energy and climate change mitigation

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Green University Policy (Guideline) Paper

2024

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GREEN UNIVERSITY POLICY (GUIDELINE) PAPER ABOUT PROMOTING GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT IN AZERBAIJANI UNIVERSITIES

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GREEN UNIVERSITY POLICY (GUIDELINE) PAPER ABOUT PROMOTING GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT IN AZERBAIJANI UNIVERSITIES

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GREEN UNIVERSITY POLICY (GUIDELINE) PAPER ABOUT PROMOTING GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT IN AZERBAIJANI UNIVERSITIES

Project acronym: REFRESH

Project title: Green and sustainable global economic improvement at Azerbaijani Universities: renewable energy and climate change mitigation

Description: The Green University Policy (Guideline) Paper outlines Azerbaijan State University of Economics' (UNEC) comprehensive Climate Action Plan, emphasizing its commitment to sustainability and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. The document details a phased greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategy, addressing emissions from energy use, transportation, waste, and procurement through short, mid, and long-term goals. UNEC integrates sustainability into education, research, and campus operations, fostering partnerships with stakeholders and leveraging initiatives like the REFRESH project funded by the European Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change is one of the most critical challenges facing humanity in the 21st century. The increasing concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere has resulted in rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and numerous ecological disruptions. As a prestigious educational institution, Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) acknowledges the urgency of climate action and the responsibility to lead by example in mitigating GHG emissions. This Climate Action Plan outlines UNEC's commitment to sustainability and the strategies we will employ to reduce our carbon footprint.

UNEC has a rich history of academic excellence and a vision to be a pioneer in economic and business education. However, we recognize that our progress should not come at the expense of the environment. Instead, we aim to integrate environmental stewardship into our core values, fostering a culture of sustainability that permeates every aspect of university life.

Climate change poses profound risks to the social, economic, and environmental aspects of our society. As educators and innovators, we must rise to the occasion and embrace our role as catalysts for positive change. By adopting the GHG Protocol Corporate Standard as the foundation for our Climate Action Plan, we ensure a robust and internationally recognized framework for measuring, managing, and reducing our GHG emissions.

The purpose of this Climate Action Plan is to outline a roadmap that will guide our journey towards a sustainable and climate-resilient university. Through collaborative efforts, inclusive decision-making, and the engagement of the entire UNEC community, we will build a future that balances academic excellence with environmental responsibility.

At the heart of our Climate Action Plan lies a commitment to setting ambitious GHG reduction targets. We understand that meaningful change requires bold actions, and we are prepared to embrace innovative solutions and transformative measures. By setting these targets, we signal our commitment to contributing to national and global efforts in combatting climate change.

Crucial to the success of our Climate Action Plan is the active involvement of our university community. Students, faculty, staff, and administrative personnel all have essential roles to play in driving transformative change.

Collaboration and partnerships will be integral to our success. UNEC recognizes that addressing climate change requires a united front. We will forge strategic partnerships with governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and other educational institutions to leverage collective expertise, resources, and influence. Together, we can amplify our impact and accelerate progress towards a sustainable future.

Our Climate Action Plan is a dynamic and adaptable document. As new technologies emerge, scientific knowledge advances, and societal needs evolve, we will adjust our strategies accordingly. We remain committed to continuous improvement, guided by the principles of sustainability and the pursuit of a low-carbon future.

In the following sections of this Climate Action Plan, we will delve into the practical steps and strategies we will undertake to reduce our GHG emissions.

From energy efficiency initiatives and sustainable transportation to waste management and water conservation, we will outline the specific actions that will drive us closer to our emission reduction targets. Additionally, we will emphasize the importance of education, engagement, monitoring, reporting, and verification, as well as the need for financial support and risk management to ensure the successful implementation of our initiatives.

Together, as the UNEC community, we embrace the call to action presented by climate change. By taking ambitious and decisive climate action, we can make a lasting impact on our environment and set a precedent for others to follow. Through collective dedication and a commitment to sustainability, we can build a brighter future for the generations to come, leaving a legacy of positive change for our university, society, and the planet.

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Organizational Profile

Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) stands as a prestigious institution of higher education, committed to excellence in the fields of economics, business, and related disciplines. Established in 1930, UNEC has played a significant role in shaping the economic landscape of Azerbaijan and the broader region. With a legacy of academic distinction and a vision for the future, UNEC strives to foster innovative thinking, entrepreneurship, and sustainable practices among its students, faculty, and staff.

MISSION

The mission of Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) is to provide world-class education and research in economics, business, and related fields. UNEC aims to nurture a new generation of competent, principled, and socially responsible professionals who can contribute to the advancement of society and the well-being of the nation. Through high-quality education, research, and community engagement, the university endeavors to drive economic development and empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to meet the challenges of a dynamic global economy

VISION

UNEC's vision is to be recognized as a leading institution of higher learning in economics and business in the region. The university aspires to excel in academic pursuits, research, and innovation while maintaining its commitment to ethical values, sustainability, and societal progress. UNEC envisions a future where its graduates make meaningful contributions to economic development, environmental preservation, and social equity, leaving a positive impact on the world.

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Commitment to Sustainability

At UNEC, sustainability is ingrained in our institutional DNA. We believe that environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and economic prosperity are intertwined and should be balanced harmoniously. As part of our commitment to sustainability, UNEC strives to:

Green Campus Initiatives: UNEC actively promotes sustainable practices on campus, including energy conservation, waste reduction, and the use of eco-friendly technologies. We aim to minimize our carbon footprint and create a greener and more sustainable learning environment.

Curricular Integration: Recognizing the significance of sustainability in addressing global challenges, UNEC incorporates sustainability principles across its academic programs. We educate and equip our students with the knowledge and skills needed to drive sustainable development.

Research for Sustainability: UNEC encourages research that addresses sustainability issues, seeking innovative solutions for environmental, social, and economic challenges. We support faculty and student research endeavors that contribute to sustainable development and advance the knowledge in relevant fields

Community Engagement: UNEC actively engages with the local community and beyond to promote sustainability awareness and positive actions. We collaborate with stakeholders to address societal needs and foster sustainable development in Azerbaijan and the region.

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Key Stakeholders

The successful implementation of UNEC's Climate Action Plan relies on the collective efforts of various stakeholders, each playing a crucial role in driving transformative change. The key stakeholders involved in the Climate Action Plan's implementation include:

Students: UNEC students are the driving force behind sustainability initiatives. As future leaders and change-makers, they play an active role in advocating for sustainability and participating in green campus activities.

Faculty and Staff: UNEC's faculty and staff members are instrumental in incorporating sustainability principles into the curriculum, research, and daily operations. Their commitment and involvement are essential for creating a sustainable university community.

Administrative Leadership: The university's administrative leaders provide the necessary support, guidance, and resources to advance sustainability efforts. Their commitment to sustainability shapes institutional policies and decision-making processes.

Community Partners: Collaborating with governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and other educational institutions is vital for broadening the impact of UNEC's sustainability initiatives and driving systemic change.

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Governance Structure

UNEC has established a governance structure to oversee the successful implementation of the Climate Action Plan. The governance structure comprises the following key entities:

Center for Sustainability: The Center for Sustainability is the focal point for coordinating and implementing sustainability initiatives at UNEC. It plays a central role in promoting sustainability across campus and fostering collaborations with stakeholders.

Sustainability Advisory Board: The Sustainability Advisory Board brings together external experts, representatives from partner organizations, and influential stakeholders. Their role is to provide strategic guidance, offer diverse perspectives, and advocate for sustainability principles at UNEC.

Working Group for Environmental Governance: This working group focuses on environmental initiatives, including energy efficiency, waste management, and sustainable campus development. It formulates policies, action plans, and strategies to reduce UNEC's environmental impact.

Working Group for Social Responsibility: The social responsibility working group focuses on community engagement, ethical practices, and social impact projects. It aims to ensure that UNEC's actions benefit the broader community and foster responsible citizenship.

Working Group for Industrial Collaboration: This working group fosters partnerships with industries and businesses to promote sustainable practices, research collaborations, and knowledge exchange. It explores opportunities for mutual benefits and sustainable economic growth.

Working Group for Sustainable Research: The sustainable research working group encourages and supports research initiatives that address sustainability challenges. It promotes interdisciplinary research and facilitates the dissemination of knowledge for sustainable development

Figure 1. Governance Structure of Sustainability at UNEC

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UNEC Greenhouse and gas emissions

This section provides a comprehensive assessment of the university's carbon footprint, detailing the emissions associated with its operations, activities, and supply chain. Through rigorous data collection and analysis, the section presents a baseline inventory for a specified base year, encompassing emissions from scopes 1, 2, and 3. In compiling a baseline greenhouse gas emissions inventory, the Sustainability Center prioritized the year 2022, as it was the most recent year unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Scope 1 emissions refer to direct greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that originate from sources that are owned or controlled by an organization. These emissions are a result of activities that are directly under the organization's operational control. Common sources of Scope 1 emissions include on-site combustion of fuels for heating, electricity generation, and other processes. Scope 2 emissions are indirect GHG emissions that result from the consumption of purchased electricity, steam, heating, or cooling by an organization. Unlike Scope 1 emissions, these emissions occur off-site at the location where the electricity or other energy is generated but are attributed to the organization that consumes the energy. Scope 2 emissions are considered indirect because the organization does not have direct control over the generation of the energy. Scope 3 emissions encompass all other indirect GHG emissions that occur as a result of an organization's activities but are beyond its direct operational control.

These emissions occur along the organization's value chain and include a wide range of sources, such as emissions from purchased goods and services, business travel, employee commuting, waste generation, and other activities related to the organization's operations. UNEC's emissions across these scopes are as below:

Scope 1 Emissions

Scope 1 emissions at UNEC primarily originate from activities directly under our control. These emissions encompass two main sources:

Stationary Combustion GHG Emissions: Stationary combustion emissions arise from the combustion of fuels for heating, electricity generation, and other processes on our campus. In 2022, UNEC emitted approximately 1,064,531.65 kg of CO2 through stationary combustion activities, while in 2023, this figure decreased to 1,042,894.83 kg, representing a decline of 3.6%.

Mobile Combustion GHG Emissions: Mobile combustion emissions are generated by the university's vehicle fleet and other transportation activities. In 2022, the University of New Earth City (UNEC) emitted 277,200 kg of CO2 from mobile combustion. This figure decreased to 273,596.4 kg in 2023, reflecting a reduction of 1.3%.

Scope 2 Emissions

Scope 2 emissions represent indirect GHG emissions resulting from the consumption of purchased electricity.In 2022, UNEC's electricity consumption resulted in approximately 926,752.5 kg of CO2 emissions. By 2023, the university's electricity consumption led to approximately 1,607,7356.4 kg of CO2 emissions, signifying a increase of 73 %.

Scope 3 Emissions

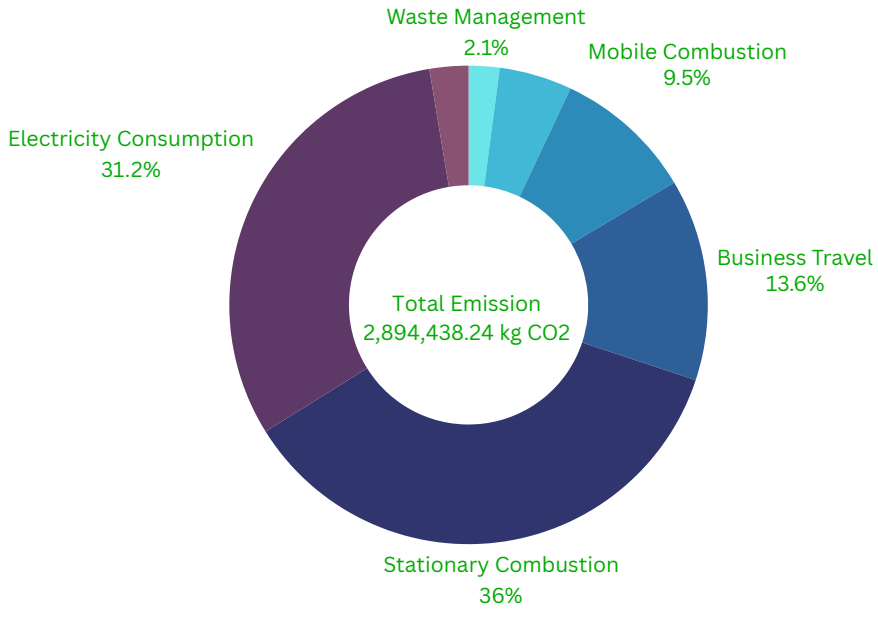
Purchased Goods and Services GHG Emissions: In 2022, the procurement of goods and services by UNEC resulted in approximately 79,826.775 kg of CO2 emissions. By 2023, this figure decreased to 75,995.1 kg, indicating a reduction of 4.8%.

Business Travel GHG Emissions: Business travel emissions are associated with the transportation of our faculty and staff for work-related purposes. In 2022, the business travel activities of the UNEC resulted in approximately 390,000 kg of CO2 emissions. By 2023, this figure increased to 3456 kg.

Employee Commuting GHG Emissions: In 2022, the daily commute of UNEC's faculty and staff contributed approximately 138,600 kg of CO2 emissions. By 2023, this figure increased to 142,356.06 kg, representing a 2.71% rise.

Waste GHG Emissions: Waste management is an essential aspect of reducing our GHG emissions. In 2022, the waste generated by UNEC resulted in approximately 60,984 kg of CO2 emissions from the decomposition of organic waste in landfills. By 2023, this figure decreased to 60,000 kg, indicating a reduction of 1.6 %.

Figure 2. UNEC Greenhouse Gas Emission for 2023



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GHG Emissions Reduction Strategy

As part of our commitment to combat climate change and promote sustainability, Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) has developed a comprehensive greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategy. Our goal is to become carbon neutral by the year 2050, aligning with global climate action initiatives. To achieve this ambitious target, we have devised three distinct phases in our GHG reduction journey: short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans. These plans outline specific initiatives and objectives tailored to each timeframe, ensuring a progressive and pragmatic approach towards a carbon-neutral future.

Short-Term GHG Reduction Plan (2022-2025)

During the short-term phase, spanning from 2022 to 2025, UNEC will focus on immediate actions to initiate our journey towards carbon neutrality. Key initiatives include conducting a comprehensive energy audit of all campus buildings to identify areas for energy efficiency improvements. We will implement energy-saving measures, explore renewable energy integration options, and engage the campus community through awareness campaigns to promote responsible energy use. These short-term efforts aim to achieve a 15% reduction in GHG emissions.

Mid-Term GHG Reduction Plan (2026-2035)

As we progress towards the mid-term phase from 2026 to 2035, UNEC will build on the shortterm achievements and further intensify our climate action efforts. The mid-term plan includes continued integration of renewable energy sources into our campus energy mix. We will explore electrification of heating systems, invest in heat pump technologies, and adopt green building standards for new construction and major renovations. The mid-term initiatives seek to achieve a 50% reduction in GHG emissions.

Long-Term GHG Reduction Plan (2036-2050)

During the long-term phase, spanning from 2036 to 2050, UNEC will take transformative steps to solidify our path to carbon neutrality. The long-term plan involves implementing carbon-neutral heating and cooling systems across all campus buildings, striving for a 100% reduction in GHG emissions. We will invest in energy storage technologies, collaborate with the local energy grid, and continuously monitor and optimize our energy use. Our long-term initiatives aim to foster a culture of sustainability, engaging the entire campus community in climate action and promoting a sense of responsibility and innovation

Table 1. GHG Reduction strategy

Scope 1	Short-Term (2022-2025)	Mid-Term (2026-2035)	Long-Term (2036- 2050)
Stationary Combustion	- Conduct energy audit of campus buildings to identify areas for energy efficiency improvements.	- Continue integration of renewable energy sources into the campus energy mix to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.	- Implement carbon-neutral heating and cooling systems across all campus buildings. Evaluate advanced heating and cooling technologies for optimal energy efficiency.
	- Implement energy-saving measures, upgrade to more efficient equipment, and optimize heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.	- Evaluate the potential of combined heat and power (CHP) systems to further increase energy efficiency	- Invest in energy storage technologies for effective grid integration and to optimize renewable energy use.
	- Explore renewable energy integration options, such as solar panels and geothermal heating systems, to offset energy consumption.	- Adopt green building standards for new construction and major renovations to ensure energyefficient and lowcarbon facilities.	- Continuously monitor and analyze energy use and GHG emissions to optimize and improve carbon reduction strategies.

Table 1. GHG Reduction strategy

Scope 2	Short-Term (2022-2025)	Mid-Term (2026-2035)	Long-Term (2036- 2050)
Electricity Consumption	- Conduct an electricity usage audit to identify energy-intensive areas and opportunities for efficiency improvements.	- Continue to increase the share of renewable energy sources in the electricity supply to reduce emissions.	- Achieve 100% renewable electricity supply to eliminate GHG emissions from electricity consumption
	- Implement energy-saving measures, such as LED lighting and energy-efficient appliances, to reduce ele	- Explore power purchase agreements (PPAs) with renewable energy providers to support sustainability goals.	- Invest in oncampus renewable energy generation to produce a significant portion of electricity needs.
	- Collaborate with electricity providers to explore green energy options and support the development of renewable energy projects	- Evaluate opportunities for onsite solar installations and other renewable energy technologies.	- Implement smart grid and energy storage solutions to optimize renewable energy utilization.
	- Engage the campus community in energy conservation efforts through awareness campaigns and educational programs.	- Promote energy efficiency practices and behavior change among students, faculty, and staff.	- Establish longterm partnerships with renewable energy suppliers to ensure a sustainable electricity supply.

Table 1. GHG Reduction strategy

Scope 3	Short-Term (2022-2025)	Mid-Term (2026- 2035)	Long-Term (2036- 2050)
Purchased Goods and Services	- Conduct a comprehensive procurement analysis to identify high-impact categories for emission reduction	- Implement sustainable procurement policies to prioritize low-carbon and environmentally friendly suppliers.	- Establish a carbon offset program to neutralize emissions from unavoidable purchases.
	- Collaborate with suppliers to track and reduce the carbon footprint of products and services.	- Foster partnerships with suppliers committed to sustainability and emissions reduction.v	- Strengthen the integration of circular economy principles to minimize waste and emissions.
	- Promote the use of recycled and ecofriendly products within the campus community	- Optimize supply chains to reduce emissions associated with transportation and logistics.	- Engage students, faculty, and staff in sustainable consumption and responsible purchasing practices.
	- Raise awareness among the campus community about the importance of sustainable purchasing decisions.	- Monitor and evaluate the environmental performance of suppliers through transparency and reporting	- Continuously assess and update procurement strategies to align with the latest sustainability standards.

Table 1. GHG Reduction strategy

Scope 3	Short-Term (2022-2025)	Mid-Term (2026- 2035)	Long-Term (2036- 2050)
Business Travel	- Encourage remote meetings and video conferences to reduce the need for business travel.	- Implement a travel carbon offset program to neutralize emissions from essential business trips.	- Develop virtual collaboration platforms to minimize the necessity of physical business travel.
	- Promote sustainable transportation options, such as public transport or carpooling, for business trips.	- Invest in virtual meeting technologies and platforms to reduce travelrelated emissions.	- Foster a culture of responsible travel and encourage alternatives to business travel when feasible.
	- Set emissions reduction targets for business travel and track progress regularly	- Engage business travelers in ecoconscious travel practices and emissions reduction efforts.	- Establish a rewards system for employees who actively contribute to reducing business travel emissions.

Table 1. GHG Reduction strategy

Scope 3	Short-Term (2022-2025)	Mid-Term (2026- 2035)	Long-Term (2036- 2050)
Employee Commuting	- Conduct a commuting survey to understand the current travel patterns of faculty and staff	- Provide incentives for sustainable commuting, such as public transport subsidies or bike-sharing programs.	- Collaborate with local authorities to improve public transportation options and infrastructure.
	- Encourage active transportation, such as walking or biking, for short-distance commuting.	- Explore telecommuting options and flexible work arrangements to reduce commuting emissions	- Engage the campus community in sustainable commuting initiatives and awareness campaigns.
	- Implement a ride-sharing program to reduce singleoccupancy vehicle trips.	- Develop carpooling and vanpooling programs to facilitate shared commuting among employees	- Establish a long-term plan to make the campus more accessible for sustainable commuting options.

Table 1. GHG Reduction strategy

Scope 3	Short-Term (2022-2025)	Mid-Term (2026- 2035)	Long-Term (2036- 2050)
Waste Management	- Conduct a waste audit to identify opportunities for waste reduction and recycling.	- Implement waste separation and recycling programs to divert waste from landfills.	- Achieve zero waste-to-landfill by implementing advanced waste management technologies.
	- Reduce singleuse plastic consumption and promote sustainable packaging on campus	- Encourage the adoption of circular economy practices to reduce waste generation.	- Engage the campus community in waste reduction efforts and responsible waste disposal practices.
	- Establish partnerships with recycling facilities and waste management companies.	- Explore wasteto-energy and other waste diversion technologies to minimize GHG emissions from waste.	- Continuously monitor and improve waste management strategies based on data-driven insights.

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Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV)

The successful execution of Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC)'s ambitious Climate Action Plan relies on the establishment of a robust Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) framework. This comprehensive system serves as the backbone of UNEC's sustainability journey, providing the necessary tools to monitor greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, assess the progress towards reduction targets, and ensure transparency and credibility in reporting. The MRV section of the plan encompasses various key elements, each designed to strengthen UNEC's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050 and drive continuous improvement in its environmental performance.

Establishing a Comprehensive MRV System

At the heart of UNEC's MRV efforts lies the development of a comprehensive system to monitor GHG emissions across all scopes and track the implementation of mitigation measures. This system is underpinned by a meticulous data collection process, encompassing information on energy consumption, transportation activities, waste generation, and procurement practices. By gathering data from diverse sources, UNEC ensures a holistic understanding of its carbon footprint, enabling targeted and informed decision-making. To guarantee the accuracy and consistency of emissions data, UNEC will employ advanced technologies for data management and quality control. Through the integration of real-time data tracking and automated data entry, UNEC can minimize errors and streamline the reporting process. Additionally, regular internal audits will be conducted to ensure data integrity and adherence to the MRV system's guidelines.

Defining Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Success

Measuring the success of UNEC's GHG reduction initiatives demands the establishment of clear and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These KPIs will serve as quantitative metrics, allowing UNEC to gauge progress towards short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals. By aligning KPIs with the specific objectives outlined in the Climate Action Plan, UNEC can effectively assess the effectiveness of its sustainability efforts. Examples of KPIs include tracking the percentage reduction in Scope 1 emissions from stationary and mobile combustion sources, monitoring the share of renewable energy integration in the electricity supply (Scope 2), assessing emissions intensity per capita, and measuring waste diversion rates. These KPIs will be regularly updated and reported in the university's annual sustainability reports, demonstrating UNEC's commitment to transparency and accountability.

Regular Reporting and Transparency

Transparent communication is an integral aspect of UNEC's sustainability journey. To ensure stakeholders are informed of the university's progress and achievements, UNEC will prepare and publish comprehensive annual sustainability reports. These reports will serve as a central repository of GHG emissions data, outlining the advancements made in the reduction strategies, and highlighting the successes and challenges faced throughout the reporting period.

The sustainability reports will be accessible to the entire UNEC community, including students, faculty, staff, governing bodies, and external stakeholders. By sharing the reports publicly on UNEC's website and disseminating them through various communication channels, UNEC aims to engage and inspire its community to actively participate in achieving the climate goals.

Third-Party Verification for Credibility

UNEC is committed to maintaining the highest standards of credibility and accountability. As part of this commitment, the university will undergo third-party verification of its emissions data and sustainability performance. Independent verification organizations, accredited in accordance with internationally recognized standards like the Greenhouse Gas Protocol, will assess UNEC's GHG inventory and reduction strategies. Third-party verification provides an objective evaluation of UNEC's MRV system, validating the accuracy and reliability of the reported emissions data. It further demonstrates UNEC's commitment to transparency and accountability, instilling confidence in stakeholders, partners, and the wider community.

Continuous Improvement and Adaptation

Recognizing the dynamic nature of sustainability challenges, UNEC is dedicated to continuous improvement and adaptation. The MRV system will serve as a powerful tool to evaluate the effectiveness of the Climate Action Plan's strategies and initiatives. By analyzing the data generated through the MRV process, UNEC can identify areas for enhancement and innovation. Lessons learned, best practices, and innovative solutions will be shared both internally and externally, fostering knowledge exchange and collaborative learning within the UNEC community and beyond. Additionally, the MRV system will support UNEC in staying informed about emerging sustainability trends and technologies, enabling the university to proactively adapt its strategies to align with evolving best practices

Towards a Sustainable Future

The MRV section of UNEC's Climate Action Plan embodies the university's dedication to realizing its vision of carbon neutrality by 2050. The establishment of a comprehensive MRV system, guided by key performance indicators, emphasizes UNEC's commitment to transparency and accountability. Through regular reporting and third-party verification, UNEC aims to inspire confidence among stakeholders and reinforce its position as a sustainability leader in the higher education sector. Embracing the principles of continuous improvement and adaptation, UNEC remains committed to driving innovative solutions and fostering a culture of sustainability. By empowering its community members to actively participate in the carbon reduction journey, UNEC is paving the way for a sustainable future, where environmental stewardship and responsible practices are woven into the fabric of the institution. As UNEC progresses on its path to carbon neutrality, the MRV framework will continue to be an invaluable tool, guiding the university towards a greener and more resilient future for generations to come.

Budget and Funding: Investing in a Sustainable Future

To achieve its carbon neutrality goal by 2050, UNEC will invest in a range of initiatives spanning energy efficiency, renewable energy adoption, sustainable transportation, waste management, and educational outreach. The following table provides an overview of the estimated financial resources required for each scope of the Climate Action Plan. The estimated budget provides a foundation for UNEC's financial planning, but it should be noted that these figures are subject to adjustment based on evolving technological advancements, market prices, and additional opportunities for cost optimization.

Initiative	Scope	Estimated Cost (USD)
Energy Efficiency Upgrades	Scope 1	$800,000
Electric Vehicle Adoption	Scope 1	$500,000
Renewable Energy Integration	Scope 2	$1,200,000
Sustainable Procurement	Scope 3	$300,000
Virtual Collaboration Tools	Scope 3	$100,000
Waste-to-Energy Technologies	Scope 3	$600,000
Educational Outreach Programs	All Scopes	$200,000
Data Management and MRV	All Scopes	$150,000
Contingency Reserve	All Scopes	$300,000
Total Estimated Budget		**$4,150,000**

Potential Funding Sources and Partnerships

UNEC recognizes that the financial requirements for achieving carbon neutrality are substantial, and a collaborative approach is essential. The university will explore a mix of funding sources and establish strategic partnerships to support the implementation of the Climate Action Plan

Internal Funding: UNEC will allocate a portion of its internal resources to support the Climate Action Plan. The commitment to sustainability may be integrated into the annual budget, allowing for steady progress towards the set goals.

Grants and Funding Programs: UNEC will actively seek grants and funding opportunities from international organizations, government agencies, and foundations that support sustainability initiatives. These grants can help accelerate the implementation of specific projects and bolster UNEC's efforts in emissions reduction.

Partnerships with Industry: Collaboration with private sector organizations can be mutually beneficial. UNEC may engage in partnerships with energy companies, technology providers, and waste management firms to access innovative solutions, expertise, and potential cofinancing opportunities.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Public-Private Partnerships can offer a valuable mechanism for funding large-scale sustainable infrastructure projects. UNEC may explore PPPs with local authorities and private companies to develop renewable energy projects or sustainable transportation solutions.

Alumni and Donor Contributions: UNEC's passionate alumni and donors may express interest in contributing to the university's sustainability efforts. Fundraising campaigns and donor engagement can attract financial support for specific initiatives.

Green Bonds and ESG Investments: UNEC can explore the issuance of green bonds or seek investments from socially responsible investors interested in supporting sustainable initiatives.

Carbon Offsetting and Trading: UNEC may explore carbon offsetting opportunities, such as supporting renewable energy projects or investing in carbon credits to compensate for its remaining emissions.

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Potential Funding Sources and Partnerships

European Commission Grant:

Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education Program As part of its commitment to advancing sustainability in higher education, UNEC has been awarded a prestigious grant from the European Commission within the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education program. The project, known as "REFRESH" (Renewable Energy for a Sustainable Future at UNEC), serves as a catalyst for the realization of UNEC's Climate Action Plan. Through the REFRESH project, UNEC collaborates with 15 local and international partners, including academic institutions, research centers, and industry experts. The European Commission grant significantly augments UNEC's financial resources, enabling the university to undertake ambitious initiatives, particularly in the areas of renewable energy integration, energy efficiency, and capacity building. The REFRESH project fosters knowledge exchange, innovation, and cross-border cooperation, enriching UNEC's sustainability efforts with diverse perspectives and expertise. The partnership with the European Commission and the collaboration with esteemed institutions under the REFRESH project exemplify UNEC's dedication to becoming a leading institution in sustainable practices. These alliances not only enhance UNEC's capacity to implement its Climate Action Plan but also reinforce the university's commitment to global sustainability goals.

A Sustainable Investment for a Resilient Future

As UNEC embarks on this journey, strategic financial planning and collaboration will be key to securing the necessary funding and driving meaningful impact. By investing in a sustainable future, UNEC not only sets an example for higher education institutions but also contributes to a more resilient, low-carbon society for generations to come.

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2024 : GREEN UNEC Year

In 2024, UNEC has announced the "Green UNEC" year. Within the framework of the Green UNEC year, 6 activity areas have been identified:

1. Activities related to ensuring visibility;
2. Activities related to ensuring communication;
3. Activities in the field of education and research;
4. Activities in the field of infrastructure improvement;
5. Activities in expanding partnerships;
6. Activities aimed at expanding the activities of the Sustainable Development and Green Economy Center named after N. Ganjavi.

Within the framework of the Green UNEC year, a number of activities are planned and implemented. Hand dryers have been installed in the restrooms; disinfectant spirits have been placed in various parts of the building to conserve water usage. Plants have been placed in various parts of the building. Students are encouraged to water the plants from time to time.

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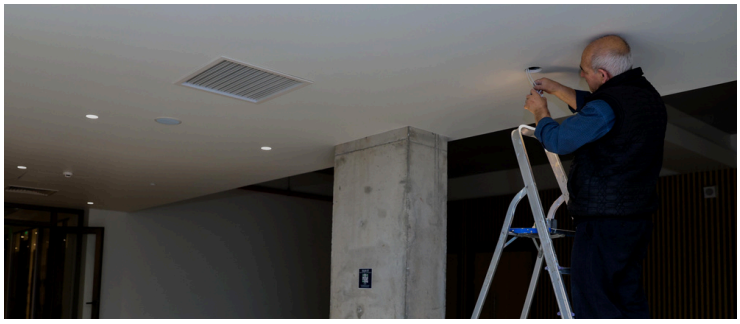
2024: GREEN UNEC Year

LED lights have been strategically installed in the corridors and office spaces as part of UNEC's commitment to energy conservation. This initiative not only reduces energy consumption but also enhances the overall ambiance and visibility within the campus environment.



Furthermore, an exhibition showcasing models crafted from recycled materials, spearheaded by the UNEC Design School, was successfully organized.

The diverse range of models on display showcased creativity and innovation, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices in design and construction.

In addition to these efforts, plans are underway to host a drawing competition and exhibition as part of the Green UNEC initiative. This initiative aims to foster artistic expression while promoting environmental awareness and sustainability among the UNEC community.

Moreover, UNEC has taken steps to enhance the greenery within its premises by strategically placing plants in various relaxation areas. This not only beautifies the campus but also creates a more conducive environment for relaxation and stress relief, contributing to the overall well-being of students, faculty, and staff.

CONCLUSION

The Climate Action Plan of Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) represents a holistic and ambitious commitment to sustainability and climate action. The plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across all three scopes and establishes a roadmap for UNEC's transformation into a carbon-neutral institution by 2050. Throughout this plan, UNEC demonstrates its dedication to becoming a leader in sustainable practices within the higher education sector, fostering a greener and more resilient future for the university community and the broader society.

At the core of UNEC's Climate Action Plan lies a bold vision: to create a sustainable and carbonneutral campus community that serves as a model of environmental responsibility. The plan's short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals set specific and achievable targets for reducing GHG emissions in all three scopes, encompassing stationary and mobile combustion, electricity consumption, purchased goods and services, business travel, commuting, and waste management. UNEC's unwavering commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050 underscores its determination to be at the forefront of sustainable practices and contribute significantly to global climate efforts.

UNEC recognizes that achieving carbon neutrality is a collaborative endeavor that necessitates the active participation of all stakeholders. The engagement of students, faculty, staff, local communities, industry partners, and international allies enriches UNEC's approach to sustainability. Through inclusive partnerships and knowledge sharing, the university empowers its community to drive meaningful change, fostering a culture of climate consciousness and collective action. In acknowledging the inevitability of climate change impacts, UNEC proactively assesses climate-related risks and develops robust adaptation strategies. By enhancing infrastructure, water management, renewable energy adoption, and health and safety measures, UNEC aims to build resilience against extreme weather events and other climate-induced challenges.

This approach fortifies the university's capacity to navigate a changing climate and continue fulfilling its educational mission.
UNEC's Climate Action Plan prioritizes investment in innovative technologies and sustainable practices. The integration of renewable energy sources, energy-efficient infrastructure, and sustainable procurement not only reduces carbon emissions but also fosters a culture of innovation that nurtures a greener and more prosperous future.
The plan's robust Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) framework ensures that UNEC maintains transparency and accountability throughout its sustainability journey. By continuously monitoring emissions data and key performance indicators (KPIs), UNEC assesses its progress and identifies areas for improvement, driving continual enhancement in its environmental performance.

UNEC acknowledges that the journey to carbon neutrality requires significant financial resources and strategic collaborations. The identification of potential funding sources, including grants, partnerships with industry, and green investments, ensures that UNEC is equipped to implement its sustainability initiatives effectively. Moreover, the European Commission grant through the REFRESH project underscores the university's ability to leverage international partnerships in advancing sustainability practices.
As a leading institution of higher education, UNEC recognizes its role in shaping the leaders of tomorrow. The inclusion of climate-resilient curriculum and research initiatives cultivates a generation of sustainability-minded graduates equipped to tackle global challenges and contribute to sustainable development.

In conclusion, Azerbaijan State University of Economics (UNEC) stands resolute in its commitment to sustainability and climate action. The Climate Action Plan represents a transformative roadmap towards a sustainable and carbon-neutral future, demonstrating UNEC's dedication to environmental stewardship and global climate leadership. As UNEC embarks on this transformative journey, it paves the way for other higher education institutions, inspiring a collective effort to address climate change and build a more sustainable world. With the collaborative efforts of its community and partners, UNEC will leave a lasting legacy of positive environmental impact, empowering present and future generations to thrive in a resilient and sustainable future.

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