

12 March 2021

## CALL FOR PARTICIPATION: ALLEA PROJECT CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY IN THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM

Climate change, caused by humans, threatens the very basis of our current existence. As academics, we have an extraordinarily large CO<sub>2</sub> footprint. Our travel habits, scientific experiments and (super)computing contribute to an unsustainable level of carbon emissions in the academic sector. To give an example, a single return flight from Frankfurt to New York leads to 2.5 tons of emitted CO<sub>2</sub>. The IPCC estimates the total remaining amount of carbon emission, before irreversible consequences occur, to be only about 500 Gigatonnes. This corresponds to about 1.8 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per person and year until the year 2050.<sup>1</sup>

To meet climate goals will require major systemic changes in all areas of industry and society, including academia. Even though the actual contribution of academic activities to global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is relatively small, we have a clear moral duty to become more sustainable and we risk being accused of hypocrisy when we warn of the dangers of climate change if we do not act to get our own house in order.

At the same time, academia thrives on global exchange and networks. Thus, viable solutions to the sustainability challenge have to carefully consider the needs arising from reconciling sustainability with global academic exchange and international networks.

Key players in the academic landscape are starting to acknowledge this reality. National funding agencies start to consider the carbon cost of research<sup>2</sup>; and recommendations for a more sustainable travel culture are being discussed.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a social-justice component of a change in travel culture has become apparent, in that online formats enable participation of researchers from the global south, who are often de-facto excluded from in-person meetings.

The ALLEA project on climate sustainability in the academic system seeks to develop a **proposal for a sustainable transformation of academia** that is based on deliberations, balanced, and takes into account all relevant perspectives, with a particular focus on academic travel culture. This requires facing the challenge of a climate sustainable academia without compromising excellence in research and without diminishing international exchange and collaboration in academia. We will develop this proposal throughout various stakeholder-hearings and working group meetings in the coming months.

This ALLEA project will be led by Die Junge Akademie who would like to **call for participation** from ALLEA member academies to develop this project. As the proposal aims to represent the diverse scientific landscape, we seek diverse participation, where dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to discipline, gender, geographic distribution, scientific seniority and role, personal view of and experience with online formats and sustainability initiatives.

---

<sup>1</sup> This number is based on the medium variant estimate for population growth, <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/Standard/Population/>.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. [https://www.dfg.de/en/service/press/press\\_releases/2020/press\\_release\\_no\\_59/index.html](https://www.dfg.de/en/service/press/press_releases/2020/press_release_no_59/index.html) and [https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/communication-publications/press/press\\_releases/nachhaltige-mobilitaet/](https://www.daad.de/en/the-daad/communication-publications/press/press_releases/nachhaltige-mobilitaet/)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.diejungeakademie.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Bilder/publikationen/20201028\\_Stellungnahme\\_Nachhaltigkeit\\_EN.pdf](https://www.diejungeakademie.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Bilder/publikationen/20201028_Stellungnahme_Nachhaltigkeit_EN.pdf)

12 March 2021

**We are looking for expressions of interest in two categories:**

1) **Members of a core working group**, who can come from any discipline, and are highly motivated to contribute to the project.

The expected workload will be around two online meetings per month of 1-2 hours each and individual work packages of a similar amount.

Outputs of the working group will be decided by the working group, but could be a set of two documents, first a careful analysis of the data regarding the climate impact of academia, second, if, based on this analysis a clear need for recommendations is identified, a set of recommendations that could, e.g., take the form of a code of conduct or a set of principles, both for individuals as well as for institutions and policymakers.

2) **Members of a consulting panel** who will be called on to join typically one or two of the meetings of the core working group to provide their input based on their expertise. Here, **disciplines we would like to see represented include, but are not limited to:**

- climate science
- climate regulation/policy/law
- economics
- regional studies and anthropology to bring perspectives from regions outside Europe to bear
- sociology and sociology of sciences
- psychology, communication studies to explore challenges of online formats and understand how to set incentives for a change in travel culture
- computer science, to deliberate the energy costs of (high-performance) computing and develop incentives for a change towards sustainability
- natural sciences with a strong experimental component, to deliberate the specific challenges of a sustainable transformation without compromising research excellence in energy- and resource-intensive experiments
- medical sciences and public health experts
- all other disciplines are also welcomed. Members from other disciplines are asked to specify in their motivation letter how their expertise can benefit the project.

We ask boards/presidents of ALLEA member academies to collect self-nominations of experts. For the core working group, an extended motivational letter of max. 2 pages and a CV should be submitted; for the consulting panel we ask for a (shorter, max. 1 page) motivational letter detailing their specific relevant expertise and a CV. If preferred, academies may add a reference letter to support the nomination(s). If an ALLEA member academy wishes to support several nominations, please make sure these reflect different academic domains outlined above.

To ensure a balanced distribution of subjects, we welcome nominations from the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.

12 March 2021

The deadline for sending in expressions of interest is April 12, 2021.



Lukas Haffert  
Speaker, Die Junge Akademie



Antonio Loprieno  
President, ALLEA