FOSSIL FREE ZONES

LINGO
Leave it in the Ground Initiative

Fossil Free Zones at German Universities

How Universities can lead the Fossil Phase-Out

In Brief

- This report lays the **foundation to make universities fossil free.**
- The Fossil Free Zones framework provides a **transparent and effective standard** for credible climate action and is in alignment with the EU Green Claims Directive.
- Our **novel database** highlights the progress of universities in becoming fossil-free and serves as a **shared progress tracker** for the fossil phase-out.
- **Dependence on fossil fuels is still large,** despite communicated high ambitions.
- Renewable, fossil-free solutions are spreading fast across Germany's university landscape, underlining **universities' leader-potential for systemic change.**
- The Fossil Phase-Out is being **slowed down by misleading claims, ineffective accounting practices and systemic shortcomings.**
- We present best practice examples, from whose successes and experiences, other stakeholders can learn.
- We discuss common challenges and provide **applicable solution-pathways** to combat those and to effectively achieve **cleaner, greener and more livable campuses and societies.**

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LINGO
Leave it in the Ground Initiative

Fossil Free Zones is a project by the Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO), an international NGO working on the forefront of accelerating a complete Fossil Phase-Out.

Introduction

Fossil Free Zones at German universities are **necessary, feasible and already emerging.**

Fossil fuels are the main driver of the climate crisis, accounting for 90 % of CO2-emissions. A full fossil phase-out is the only credible and most reliable pathway to meet climate goals. While policy-makers are slow to turn this need into reality, institutions can act within their own spheres of influence to drive the transformation bottom-up.

Universities can play a decisive role in this transformation. They generate knowledge, shape norms, develop innovative solutions and educate future decision-makers. Through their public credibility and institutional reach, universities are well positioned to shape the sustainability transition.

Indeed, many universities communicate strong commitments to climate action. However, climate strategies often rely on offsets and rarely include an explicit exit from fossil fuels. This leads to a gap between science-prescribed reduction paths and respective action towards it.

The Fossil Free Zones framework addresses this gap by focusing directly on the root cause of the climate crisis: the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. It offers a transparent and more effective alternative to accounting-based climate neutrality.

This report provides the first systematic overview of progress towards becoming fossil-free across German universities. It documents existing partially and completely fossil-free places, highlights best practices, identifies recurring structural challenges, and outlines practical ways to accelerate a full fossil phase-out.

What are Fossil Free Zones?

The Fossil Free Zones framework identifies places that operate without the extraction and burning of fossil fuels and makes them visible on an interactive map. Qualifiable Zones include *fully* Fossil Free Zones, *partially* Fossil Free Zones (Oil Free, Gas Free, or Coal Free) and, for geopolitical regions only, Fossil Extraction Free Zones. Thereby, we're surfacing the global progress for a clean and prosperous Fossil Free future and urge all actors to join the global fossil-free family.

FOSSIL FREE ZONE | COAL FREE ZONE | GAS FREE ZONE | OIL FREE ZONE

Scope: All energy use inside the Zone is considered: No fossil fuels should be combusted within its boundaries nor used to generate its imported energy. The fossil-free status of a zone is a simple and transparent indicator of whether a site relies on burning fossil fuels in practice. The framework builds on the work of Fergus Green who first proposed the idea in 2018.

Why is it necessary?

Fossil fuels are the root cause of climate change, accounting for nearly 90 % of global CO2 emissions. Beyond the climate crisis, they fuel global conflicts and create dangerous dependencies. Their extraction destroys ecosystems and harms local communities.

Crucially, the fossil fuel industry spends millions on misinformation to block the energy transition. If an institution wants to become more sustainable but continues to rely on fossil fuels, it paradoxically supports the very system that it wants to overcome.

Read the full article:
Green, F. (2022). Fossil Free Zones: a proposal. Climate Policy, 22(9–10), 1356–1362.

Check our Website and FAQ to learn more.

Everyone can become fossil free!

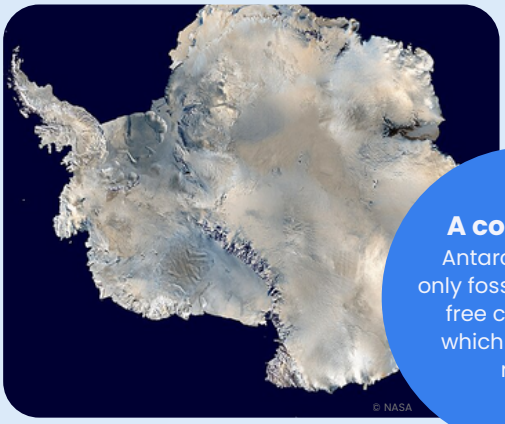
From single buildings to a whole continent! Here are some examples:

A school
The "Freie Schule Heckenbeck" is completely fossil-free!

A museum
The "Nawareum" operates completely fossil-free!

A home
Every home can and should be fossil-free. View the case study on Lifehaus here.

A community
After relentless protests, the Sarayaku Community in the Amazon Rainforest remains a fossil extraction free community.



A continent
Antarctica is the only fossil-extraction free continent - which will be the next?

A country
Portugal became entirely coal free!

Fossil Free Zones in Transition

Recognizing those who lead the way

Becoming fossil-free doesn't happen overnight. The Fossil Free Zone in Transition framework recognizes institutions that have made a binding commitment to complete fossil-freedom and are actively working toward it. It's for those who don't just talk about climate action, but plan it, resource it, and deliver it.

Why commit now?

Climate neutrality targets have lost credibility. With the EU Green Claims Directive and CSRD raising the bar for environmental claims, a formal commitment to fossil-freedom must become the new standard for science-based climate action. Universities can be at the forefront of this shift.

Most universities could qualify. One has done so. Who will be the next?

What it takes to qualify:

- A binding commitment to achieve fossil-freedom, officially approved by leadership (e.g., Rectorate, Board) and publicly announced.
- A credible action plan that includes a concrete roadmap with milestones, clear responsibilities, and defined timelines for each phase of the transition.
- A complete inventory of all fossil fuel appliances currently in use, serving as the baseline for tracking progress.

What you gain

Registration as a Fossil Free Zone in Transition brings visibility and recognition. Your institution will be featured on our interactive map, included in reports and case studies, and become part of a growing family of climate leaders. Use it to communicate your ambition, internally and externally.

Our Research

This report covers all 435 German universities. During the year 2025, we systematically reviewed all publicly available data and conducted direct outreach to every institution. Some universities remained unresponsive despite several follow-ups. In these instances, our findings rely on existing public records, which were occasionally outdated or incomplete. Consequently, we acknowledge that our database may underestimate the number of Fossil Free Zones. We invite university officials to reach out to ensure their institution is accurately represented in our database and that Fossil Free Zones become registered on the map. In the ever changing landscape of sustainable development, this report provides a snapshot. Nonetheless, we followed a consistent process and therefore can provide a robust basis to identify systemic patterns.

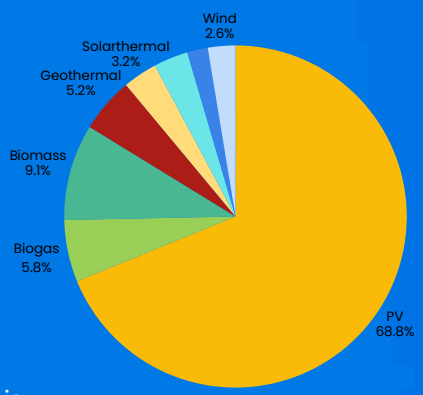
The Database: An Overview

We proudly present a novel and extensive database that tracks universities' progress toward becoming fossil-free. The full database, with all details is publicly available here. A conversion is found below. This page sums up some key insights:

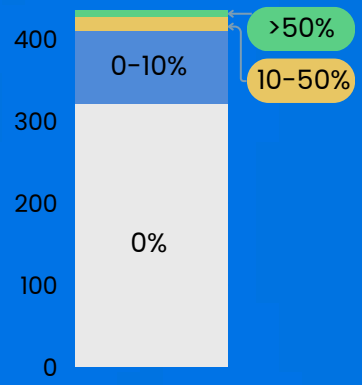
1. Few Fossil Free Zones!
No University is fully fossil-free yet, despite it being the most effective and transparent GHG-reduction strategy. This finding once more underlines the relevance of our approach and this project to uncover this deficit. The few identified Zones are presented below. Due to incomplete response patterns there may be unidentified Fossil Free Zones, which we invite to reach out and get registered!

2. Technological Diversity
Only one quarter of screened universities have adopted fossil-free energy sources. Among those are primarily PV-systems (69 %), followed by biogenic fuels like biomass and biogas. Also geothermal energy, solar thermal systems, wind energy and heat pumps are being used to replace fossil fuels.

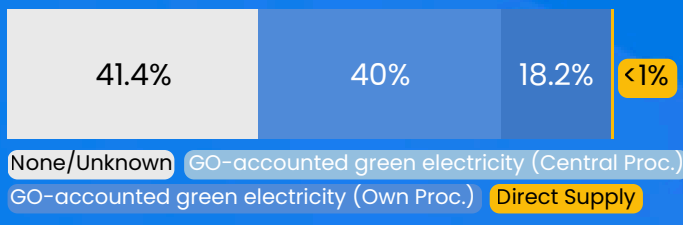
Frequency of Renewables



Coverage of Renewables



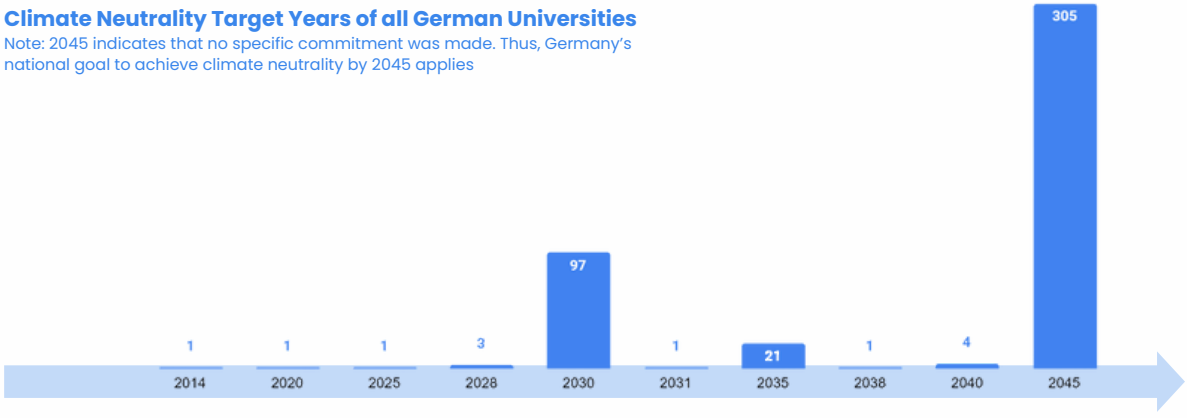
3. Limited Scale
Where renewables are in use, their share is mostly minimal (below 10 % of total demand). This highlights the urgency for universities to move beyond symbolic adoption of renewables towards substantial replacement of fossil fuels. Notably, there are seven universities with renewable shares exceeding 50 %, which demonstrates that fossil-free campuses are achievable. Today, those universities with high renewable shares rely primarily on biogenic fuels. However, this landscape is currently shifting as large-scale PV systems, geothermal installations, and heat pump systems are spreading fast.



4. "Green electricity" isn't always green
Based on our analysis, at least 60 % of German universities procure so-called "green electricity". However, the underlying accounting mechanisms that is based on uncoupled Guarantees of Origin (GOs) is highly questionable, as outlined below. For public universities, procurement is often organized centrally by the public administration of the federal states.

5. Climate Neutrality Targets are two-sided
A relevant amount of universities aims to achieve climate neutrality well before Germany's national goal of 2045. In most cases these are driven by the climate acts of federal states. On the one hand, this illustrates high declared ambition across the sector. On the other hand, climate neutrality relies on offsetting, which reduces incentives to pursue real emission reductions.

Climate Neutrality Target Years of all German Universities
Note: 2045 indicates that no specific commitment was made. Thus, Germany's national goal to achieve climate neutrality by 2045 applies



Fossil Free Zones at German Universities

This section presents the Fossil Free Zones we identified in our assessment of all 435 German universities. To date, we have identified only four zones. While this amount underlines the extensive fossil dependence and the need for change, the following examples demonstrate that the Fossil Free Zones framework is widely applicable and fossil free campuses are a practical reality.

1. The Lab & Seminar Building

at TH Ulm

This new "Passivhaus-Plus" building at THU's Campus Eselsberg generates more power than it consumes. A 420 kWp PV system powers the heat pumps and building operations, with excess energy fed into a power storage system. While the central infrastructure is 100 % renewable, fossil gas is still used in the laboratories. Replacing this dependency is a feasible final step to become a completely Fossil Free Zone. The building was planned and built by the Baden-Wurttembergian VBV, which thereby sets a high standard for public construction.

Read the Full Case Study

Self-sufficient systems eliminate dependencies, create additional decentralized capacity, and are demonstrably free from fossil fuels.

2. High Performance Data Center

at Göttingen University

FOSSIL FREE ZONE IN TRANSITION

This new high-performance data center is turning fossil-free in 2027. It already sources 50 % of its electricity through a *Grüner Strom Label*-certified tariff, ensuring direct procurement from renewable production. From 2027, this will increase to 100 % as required by the Energy Efficiency Act (EnEfG). The building needs no additional heating as waste heat from the servers is recovered to heat the office spaces.

COAL & OIL FREE ZONE

3. KHSB

Catholic University of Applied Social Sciences Berlin

KHSB sources 100 % of its electricity through a *Grüner Strom Label*–certified tariff, provided by *Mann Strom*. While the university has successfully eliminated coal and oil from its energy portfolio, the supplied district heating is still based on burning fossil gas.

FOSSIL FREE ZONE

4. Food Forest at Leuphana University

The Food Forest at Leuphana University is cultivated only manually, without the use of fossil fuel-powered tools. This little biodiversity hotspot can be seen as a prototype for large scale campus management, which combines fossil-free operation with creating calming, inspiring learning environments. We emphasize that Fossil Free Zones are not only free of fossils but also full of life-enriching qualities.

Fossil Free Zones ensure direct procurement of renewable energy. No need to exit the grid.

Emerging Fossil Free Zones

No university is completely fossil-free yet, but many are only a few steps away. We encourage them to complete the transition and ask all others to follow. Although they have not yet reached the goal, their progress is remarkable and insightful. Sharing good practices should drive mutual learning and moving toward fossil-freedom all together.

Umweltcampus Birkenfeld

The campus uses 100 % fossil-free heat from a district heating network powered by a biomass plant. On-site photovoltaic systems generate up to 50 % of the campus's annual electricity demand.

Leuphana University Lüneburg

The central campus uses 100 % fossil-free heat from a biogas-powered combined heat and power plant (CHP). On-site photovoltaic systems feed around 500 MWh per year into the campus grid, covering approximately 15 % of annual electricity demand.

EURO-FH Hamburg

The university uses 100 % fossil-free heat based on biogas.

Hochschule Wismar

On-site photovoltaic systems cover approximately 11 % of total annual electricity demand. A pellet boiler with a nominal capacity of 540 kW generates around 20 % of annual heating demand.

h2 - Magdeburg Stendal

Around 90 % of heat demand is covered by burning wood pellets. Extensive photovoltaic systems are installed on most university buildings.

Catholic University Eichstätt

75 % of heat is supplied by biomass district heating. The remaining 25 % are self-generated, using "Climate Gas" (fossil gas, incl. offsets) following a 2022 biogas shortage. A return to biogas is planned. Local PV systems contribute approximately 20 MWh/ year.

University of Augsburg

PV-Systems are currently being expanded from 1 MWp to 2,5 MWp. This is expected to yield an annual production of 2,1 GWh from 2027 onwards.

Alanus University of Arts and Social Sciences

Campus 1 is supplied with 100 % fossil-free heat, while Campus 2 reaches approximately 50 % fossil-free heat through biomass burning. On-site photovoltaic generation covers about 3 % (11 MWh per year) of electricity demand.

University for Sustainable Development Eberswalde

Approximately 80 % of heat is generated using wood-chip and pellet heating systems, while fossil gas is used during transitional periods. One heat pump is installed. Photovoltaic systems produce around 22 MWh of electricity per year.

University of Music Trossingen

Two of three buildings are supplied with fossil-free district heating based on biogas. The remaining building is scheduled for demolition. A photovoltaic system with a capacity of 26.7 kWp is in operation.

These are just a few examples. You can find more in the database.

The Full Database

We provide an open and shared platform to track progress, learn from each other and become fossil-free all together. The complete online database can be accessed here. This abbreviated version provides an overview of the extensive fossil dependence of the sector.

University	1. Fossil Free Zones present	2. Renewable Energies present	3. Coverage of Renewable Energies	4. Electricity Procurement Type	5. Energy Data Reporting	6. Climate Neutrality Target

Legend

- – = None identified
- ✓ = Renewables present
- ∅ = None identified
- ∅ = Minor (<10 %)
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- ☒ = Fossil based / Unknown
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accadis Hochschule Bad Homburg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	AKAD University	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Akademie der Bildenden Künste München			∅	ϟ		2045
Akademie der Bildenden Künste Nürnberg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Akademie der Polizei Hamburg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Akkon-Hochschule			∅	ϟ		2045
Alanus Hochschule für Kunst und Gesellschaft	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045	Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2030	Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin		✓	∅	ϟ		2045
Allensbach Hochschule Konstanz	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	APOLLON Hochschule der Gesundheitswirtschaft	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Archivschule Marburg			∅	ϟ		2030
Arden University Berlin	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Augustana-Hochschule Neuendettelsau	–	–	∅	ϟ	i	2045	Bard College Berlin, A Liberal Arts University			∅	ϟ	i	2045
Barenboim-Said Akademie	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Bauhaus-Universität Weimar	–	–	∅	ϟ	i	2030	bbw Hochschule			∅	ϟ		2045
Bergische Universität Wuppertal	–	✓	∅	ϟ		2045	Berlin International University of Applied Sciences	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Berlin School of Business of Innovation			∅	ϟ		2045
Berliner Hochschule für Technik	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045	Berufliche Hochschule Hamburg (BHH)	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Brand University of Applied Sciences			∅	ϟ		2045
Brandenburgische Technische Universität Cottbus-Senftenberg	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045	BSP Business and Law School - Hochschule für Management und Recht	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Bucerius Law School, Hochschule für Rechtswissenschaft		✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045
Burg Giebichenstein Kunsthochschule Halle	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2035	CBS International Business School			∅	ϟ		2045
Charlotte Fresenius Hochschule	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel	–	✓	∅	ϟ		2045	CODE University of Applied Sciences			∅	ϟ		2045
Constructor University	–	–	∅	ϟ	i	2045	CVJM-Hochschule	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Deutsche Hochschule der Polizei Münster			∅	ϟ		2045
Deutsche Hochschule für Prävention und Gesundheitsmanagement	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Deutsche Sporthochschule Köln	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045	Deutsche Universität für Verwaltungswissenschaften Speyer			∅	ϟ		2045
DHGS Deutsche Hochschule für Gesundheit und Sport	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Digital Business University of Applied Sciences	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	DIPLOMA Hochschule - Private Fachhochschule Nordhessen			∅	ϟ		2045
DIU - Dresden International University GmbH	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2030	Duale Hochschule Gera-Eisenach			∅	ϟ		2030
Duale Hochschule Schleswig-Holstein	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2030	EBS Universität für Wirtschaft und Recht			∅	ϟ	i	2045
EBZ Business School - University of Applied Sciences	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	EHIP – Europäische Hochschule für Innovation und Perspektive	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Ernst-Abbe-Hochschule Jena			∅	ϟ		2030
ESCP Europe Wirtschaftshochschule Berlin e.V.	–	–	∅	ϟ	i	2045	ESMT European School of Management and Technology	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045	Europa-Universität Flensburg		✓	∅	ϟ	i	2040
Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)	–	✓	∅	ϟ		2045	Europäische Fachhochschule Rhein/Erft	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Europaische Fernhochschule Hamburg		✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045
Evangelische Hochschule Berlin	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Evangelische Hochschule Darmstadt	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Evangelische Hochschule Dresden			∅	ϟ		2045
Evangelische Hochschule Freiburg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Evangelische Hochschule für Kirchenmusik	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Evangelische Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit & Diakonie			∅	ϟ		2045
Evangelische Hochschule Ludwigsburg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Evangelische Hochschule Nürnberg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Evangelische Hochschule Rheinland-Westfalen-Lippe			∅	ϟ	i	2040
Evangelische Hochschule Tabor	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Fachhochschule Aachen	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2030	Fachhochschule der Diakonie - Diaconia - University of Applied Sciences			∅	ϟ		2045
Fachhochschule der Polizei Brandenburg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Fachhochschule der Verwaltung des Saarlandes	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Fachhochschule der Wirtschaft			∅	ϟ		2045
Fachhochschule des Mittelstands (FHM)	–	–	∅	ϟ	i	2045	Fachhochschule Dortmund	–	✓	∅	ϟ	i	2045	Fachhochschule Dresden			∅	ϟ		2045
Fachhochschule Erfurt	–	–	∅	ϟ	i	2030	Fachhochschule für die Wirtschaft Hannover	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Fachhochschule für Finanzen Brandenburg			∅	ϟ		2045
Fachhochschule für Interkulturelle Theologie Hermannsburg	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Fachhochschule für öffentliche Verwaltung, Polizei und Rechtspflege Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	–	–	∅	ϟ		2045	Fachhochschule für Rechtspflege Nordrhein-Westfalen			∅	ϟ		2045

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University	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Fachhochschule für Sport und Management Potsdam	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Fachhochschule für Verwaltung und Dienstleistung	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Fachhochschule Kiel		✓	∅	☒		2045
Fachhochschule Polizei Sachsen-Anhalt	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Fachhochschule Potsdam	–	✓	∅	☒		2045
Fachhochschule Südwestfalen			∅	☒		2030
Fachhochschule Wedel	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Fachhochschule Westküste, Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Technik	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
FernUniversität in Hagen		✓	∅	☒	i	2045
FH Münster University of Applied Sciences	–	✓	∅	☒		2045
Filmuniversität Babelsberg Konrad Wolf	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Fliedner Fachhochschule Düsseldorf			∅	☒		2045
Folkwang Universität der Künste	–	–	∅	☒		2045
FOM Hochschule für Oekonomie & Management	–	✓	∅	☒		2045
Frankfurt School of Finance & Management			∅	☒		2045
Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030
Freie Hochschule Stuttgart - Seminar für Waldorfpädagogik	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Freie Theologische Hochschule Gießen			∅	☒		2045
Freie Universität Berlin	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Fresenius Berlin	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Fresenius Düsseldorf			∅	☒	i	2045
Fresenius Frankfurt a.M.	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Fresenius Hamburg	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Fresenius Idstein/Wiesbaden			∅	☒		2040
Fresenius Köln	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Fresenius München	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Fresenius Online Campus			∅	☒	i	2045
Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen		✓	∅	☒	i	2030
GISMA University of Applied Sciences	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Goethe-Universität Frankfurt	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover		✓	∅	☒	i	2031
GU Deutsche Hochschule	–	–	∅	☒		2045
HafenCity Universität Hamburg	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hamburger Fern-Hochschule			∅	☒		2045
HAWK Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaft und Kunst Hildesheim/Holzminden/Göttingen	–	–	∅	☒	i	2035
Heinrich Heine Universität Düsseldorf	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Helmut-Schmidt-Universität/Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg			∅	☒		2045
Hertie School	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Hessische Hochschule für Finanzen und Rechtspflege	–	–	∅	☒		2030
Hessische Hochschule für öffentliches Management und Sicherheit			∅	☒		2030
HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management	–	–	∅	☒		2045
HMKW Hochschule für Medien, Kommunikation und Wirtschaft	–	–	∅	☒		2045
HMU Health and Medical University			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule 21	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule Aalen - Technik und Wirtschaft	–	–	∅	☒		2030
Hochschule Albstadt-Sigmaringen			∅	☒		2030
Hochschule Anhalt	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Biberach - Architektur und Bauwesen, Energie Betriebswirtschaft sowie Biotechnologie	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule Bielefeld – University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSBI)			∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Bochum - University of Applied Sciences	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Ostfalia Hochschule Braunschweig/Wolfenbüttel			∅	☒		2035
Hochschule Bremen	–	–	∅	☒	i	2038
Hochschule Bremerhaven	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule Darmstadt			∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule der Bayerischen Wirtschaft für angewandte Wissenschaften - HDBW	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule der bildenden Künste (HBK) Essen	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule der Bildenden Künste Saar		✓	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule der Deutschen Bundesbank	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart			∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule der Polizei Brandenburg	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule der Polizei Rheinland-Pfalz	–	–	∅	☒		2030
Hochschule der Sächsischen Polizei			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule der Wirtschaft für Management	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Döpfer			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule Düsseldorf	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Emden/Leer	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2035
Hochschule Esslingen			∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule Flensburg	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule Fresenius	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Fresenius Heidelberg			∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Fulda	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften Ansbach	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften Coburg			∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften Hamburg	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften Hof	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften Kempten			∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften München	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften Neu-Ulm	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften Weihenstephan-Triesdorf		✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für angewandtes Management	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Städelschule)	–	–	∅	☒		2030
Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig			∅	☒	i	2035
Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für den öffentlichen Dienst in Bayern			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für evangelische Kirchenmusik	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film München	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Finanzen NRW			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Finanzen Rheinland-Pfalz	–	–	∅	☒		2030
Hochschule für Finanzwirtschaft & Management	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Forstwirtschaft Rottenburg			∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule für Gesellschaftsgestaltung	–	–	∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Gestaltung Offenbach	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule für Gestaltung Schwäbisch Gmünd			∅	☒		2030

University	1. Fossil Free Zones present	2. Renewable Energies present	3. Coverage of Renewable Energies	4. Electricity Procurement Type	5. Energy Data Reporting	6. Climate Neutrality Target

Legend

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Hochschule für Gesundheit - University of Applied Sciences	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg		✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für Katholische Kirchenmusik und Musikpädagogik	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Kirchenmusik der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Kirchenmusik der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Landeskirche Sachsens			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Kirchenmusik der Evangelischen Kirche von Westfalen	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Kirchenmusik der Evangelischen Landeskirche in Baden	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Kirchenmusik der Evangelischen Landeskirche in Württemberg			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Kommunikation und Gestaltung	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Künste Bremen	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Künste im Sozialen, Ottersberg			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler" Berlin	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber Dresden	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Musik Detmold			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Musik Franz Liszt Weimar	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule für Musik Karlsruhe	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule für Musik Nürnberg			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Musik Saar	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln			∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Musik und Theater München			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Musik und Theater Rostock	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Musik Würzburg	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover			∅	☒		2035
Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung Eberswalde	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045	Hochschule für Öffentliche Verwaltung Bremen	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für öffentliche Verwaltung Kehl			∅	☒		2030
Hochschule für öffentliche Verwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule für öffentliche Verwaltung und Finanzen Ludwigsburg	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule für öffentliche Verwaltung und Rechtspflege			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Philosophie	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Polizei Baden-Württemberg	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule für Polizei und öffentliche Verwaltung Nordrhein-Westfalen			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Rechtspflege Schwetzingen	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule für Schauspielkunst Ernst Busch	–	✓	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Soziale Arbeit und Pädagogik (HSAP) gemeinnützige Betriebsgesellschaft mbH			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Technik Stuttgart	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft des Saarlandes			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Dresden	–	–	∅	☒	i	2035	Hochschule für Technik, Wirtschaft und Kultur Leipzig	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Ludwigshafen			∅	☒		2030
Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Recht Berlin	–	✓	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule Furtwangen	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Geisenheim			∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule Hamm-Lippstadt	–	✓	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule Hannover	–	–	∅	☒	i	2035	Hochschule Harz		✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Heilbronn, Technik, Wirtschaft, Informatik	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Kaiserslautern	–	✓	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule Karlsruhe - Technik und Wirtschaft		✓	∅	☒		2030
Hochschule Koblenz	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Konstanz Technik, Wirtschaft und Gestaltung	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Landshut			∅	☒		2045
Hochschule Macromedia Stuttgart	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Mainz			∅	☒		2030
Hochschule Mannheim	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule Merseburg	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045	Hochschule Mittweida			∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Neubrandenburg	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule Niederrhein	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045	Hochschule Nordhausen			∅	☒		2030
Hochschule Nürtingen-Geislingen	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Offenburg	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Osnabrück			∅	☒	i	2035
Hochschule Pforzheim	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Ravensburg-Weingarten	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Hochschule Reutlingen			∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule Rhein-Waal	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule RheinMain	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Ruhr West-University of Applied Sciences		✓	∅	☒	i	2045
Hochschule Schmalkalden	–	–	∅	☒	i	2030	Hochschule Stralsund – University of Applied Sciences,	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045	Hochschule Trier (exkl. Umweltcampus)		✓	∅	☒	i	2030
Hochschule Weserbergland	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Hochschule Wismar	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045	Hochschule Worms			∅	☒		2030
Hochschule Zittau/Görlitz	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045	Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2045	IB Hochschule für Gesundheit und Soziales			∅	☒		2045
International Psychoanalytic University Berlin	–	–	∅	☒		2045	International School of Management	–	–	∅	☒	i	2045	Internationale Hochschule Liebenzell (IHL)			∅	☒		2045
Internationale Hochschule SDI München	–	–	∅	☒		2045	INU - Innovative Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften	–	–	∅	☒		2045	IST-Hochschule für Management			∅	☒	i	2045
Jade Hochschule	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2035	Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz	–	–	∅	☒		2030	Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg			∅	☒	i	2028
Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen	–	✓	∅	☒	i	2030	Karlshochschule International University	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Karlsruher Institut für Technologie		✓	∅	☒	i	2030
Katholische Hochschule Freiburg	–	–	∅	☒		2045	Katholische Hochschule für Sozialwesen Berlin (KHSB)		✓	∅	☒		2045	Katholische Hochschule Mainz			∅	☒		2045

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3. Coverage of Renewable Energies
4. Electricity Procurement Type
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University																								
Katholische Hochschule Nordrhein-Westfalen	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Katholische Stiftungshochschule München	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2035	Katholische Universität Eichstätt - Ingolstadt	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2025
Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Kölner Hochschule für Katholische Theologie (KHKT)	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Kolping Hochschule	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Kommunale Hochschule für Verwaltung in Niedersachsen	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Kühne Logistics University - Wissenschaftliche Hochschule für Logistik und Unternehmensführung	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Kunstakademie Düsseldorf	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Kunstakademie Münster, Hochschule für Bildende Künste	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Leibniz-Fachhochschule	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Leuphana Universität Lüneburg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2014	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2045	Lutherische Theologische Hochschule Oberursel	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	media Akademie - Hochschule Stuttgart	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2045	Mediadesign Hochschule für Design und Informatik	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Medical School Berlin - Hochschule für Gesundheit und Medizin (MSB)	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Medizinische Hochschule Brandenburg Theodor Fontane	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Medizinische Hochschule Hannover (MHH)	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2045
Merz Akademie Stuttgart	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	MSH Medical School Hamburg	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Munich Business School	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Musikhochschule Lübeck	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2040	Muthesius Kunsthochschule	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	NBS Northern Business School	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
NORDAKADEMIE Hochschule der Wirtschaft	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Norddeutsche Akademie für Finanzen und Steuerrecht	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Norddeutsche Hochschule für Rechtspflege	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2035
Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Amberg-Weiden	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045
Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2035	Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Pädagogische Hochschule Heidelberg	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030
Pädagogische Hochschule Karlsruhe	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2030	Pädagogische Hochschule Ludwigsburg	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Pädagogische Hochschule Schwäbisch Gmünd	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030
Pädagogische Hochschule Weingarten	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Palucca Hochschule für Tanz Dresden	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	PFH - Private Hochschule Göttingen	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Philipps-Universität Marburg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2030	Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Münster	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Philosophisch-Theologische Hochschule Sankt Georgen Frankfurt am Main	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Polizeiakademie Niedersachsen	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2035	Private Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Technik Vechta/Diepholz	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Private Universität Witten/Herdecke gGmbH	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045
Provadis School of International Management and Technology	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Psychologische Hochschule Berlin (PHB)	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Quadriga Hochschule Berlin	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Rheinische Hochschule Köln	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045
Rheinland-Pfälzische Technische Universität Kaiserslautern-Landau	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Robert-Schumann-Hochschule Düsseldorf	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Ruhr-Universität Bochum	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045
Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2030	SRH Berlin University of Applied Sciences	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	SRH Fernhochschule	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2020
SRH Hochschule für Gesundheit	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	SRH Hochschule Heidelberg	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	SRH Hochschule in Nordrhein-Westfalen	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
SRH Wilhelm Löhe Hochschule	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2030	Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2030
Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2030	Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Freiburg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2030	Staatliche Hochschule für Musik Trossingen	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2030
Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Mannheim	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Steinbeis Hochschule	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Steuerakademie Niedersachsen	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Stiftung Tierärztliche Hochschule Hannover	–	✓	∅	⊠	–	2035	Technische Hochschule Aschaffenburg	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2028
Technische Hochschule Augsburg	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2045	Technische Hochschule Bingen	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Technische Hochschule Brandenburg	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2045
Technische Hochschule Deggendorf	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Technische Hochschule Georg Agricola	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2028	Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Technische Hochschule Köln	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Technische Hochschule Lübeck	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Technische Hochschule Mittelhessen	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030
Technische Hochschule Nürnberg Georg Simon Ohm	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2045	Technische Hochschule Ostwestfalen-Lippe	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Technische Hochschule Rosenheim	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045
Technische Hochschule Ulm	–	✓	∅	⊠	–	2030	Technische Hochschule Wildau	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Technische Hochschule Würzburg-Schweinfurt	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045
Technische Universität Bergakademie Freiberg	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045	Technische Universität Berlin	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Technische Universität Carolo-Wilhelmina zu Braunschweig	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2035
Technische Universität Chemnitz	–	✓	∅	⊠	–	2045	Technische Universität Clausthal	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2035	Technische Universität Darmstadt	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030
Technische Universität Dortmund	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2030	Technische Universität Dresden	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045	Technische Universität Hamburg	–	✓	∅	⊠	i	2045
Technische Universität Ilmenau	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2030	Technische Universität München	–	–	∅	⊠	i	2045	Theologische Fakultät Fulda	–	–	∅	⊠	–	2045

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Theologische Fakultät Paderborn	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Theologische Fakultät Trier	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Theologische Hochschule Elstal	_	_	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Theologische Hochschule Friedensau	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Theologische Hochschule Reutlingen	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Theologisches Hochschule Ewersbach	_	_	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Thüringer Fachhochschule für öffentliche Verwaltung	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Tomorrow University of Applied Sciences	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Touro College Berlin	_	_	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Umweltcampus Birkenfeld (Teil der Hochschule Trier)	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Augsburg	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Bayreuth	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Bielefeld	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2035
Universität Bremen	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität der Bundeswehr München	_	_	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität der Künste Berlin	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität des Saarlandes	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Duisburg-Essen	_	_	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Erfurt	-	-	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Greifswald	-	-	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Hamburg	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Hildesheim	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	_	2035
Universität Hohenheim	-	-	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Kassel	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Koblenz	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Konstanz	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Leipzig	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Mannheim	-	-	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Münster	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Universität Osnabrück	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2035
Universität Paderborn	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Universität Passau	-	-	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Potsdam	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Regensburg	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Rostock	-	-	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Siegen	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Universität Stuttgart	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Trier	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Ulm	_	_	Ø	ϟ	i	2030
Universität Vechta	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2035
Universität zu Köln	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Universität zu Lübeck	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
University of Europe for Applied Sciences	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
University of Labour	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
VICTORIA	_	_	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Vinzenz Pallotti University	-	-	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
VWA-Hochschule für berufsbegleitendes Studium	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
weißensee kunsthochschule berlin	_	_	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Westfälische Hochschule Gelsenkirchen, Bocholt, Recklinghausen	-	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Westsächsische Hochschule Zwickau	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
WHU - Otto Beisheim School of Management	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045
Wilhelm Büchner Hochschule - Private Fernhochschule Darmstadt	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
XU Exponential University	-	-	Ø	ϟ	_	2045
Zeppelin Universität - Hochschule zwischen Wirtschaft, Kultur und Politik	_	✓	Ø	ϟ	i	2045

Legend

- – = None identified
- ✓ = Renewables present
- Ø = None identified
- Ø = Minor (<10 %)
- Ø = Significant (10-50 %)
- Ø = Extensive (>50 %)
- ϟ = Fossil based / Unknown
- ϟ = GO-accounted "Green Electricity"
- ϟ = Direct Supply
- i = Public Energy Reporting available

This database is not a ranking but a shared tool for collective progress. We intentionally avoid scores or indices, as data coverage differs and transformation processes are evolving rapidly. Universities face very different institutional conditions, capacities, and budgetary realities, which makes direct comparison misleading.

Instead we provide a live database to establish clearer standards and track progress towards it. We invite universities to notify us to get their newest achievements live.

The database pictures the status quo and is designed as an openly accessible progress tracker for the fossil phase-out at universities. It clearly shows the current large dependence on fossil fuel use, only a few years before many climate neutrality targets are due.
This underlines the need to embed a complete fossil phase-out strategy into universities' climate action plans.

Challenges & Solutions

After nine months of research and close exchange with practitioners, we identified recurring challenges that hinder fossil-free transitions at universities. But for every problem there is a solution so addressing these and developing strategies became a central part of this project.

This section outlines recurring pitfalls, misleading approaches, and structural barriers, alongside practical pathways to address them. It supports universities in avoiding common mistakes and taking meaningful action toward becoming fossil-free

"GREEN ELECTRICITY" PROCUREMENT IS OFTEN INEFFECTIVE

CHALLENGE

Our analysis shows that at least 60 % of universities purchase electricity **marketed as "renewable"**. However, these claims build on a market-based accounting approach, in which electricity and "Guarantees" of Origin (GOs) are procured separately. While the purchased electricity comes from unknown and fossil-based generation, GOs are procured from other renewable plants, often from Norwegian Hydropower. Despite the fossil origin of the purchased electricity, it is thereby accounted as emissions-reduced or even emissions-free in many institutional carbon balances. This practice is **highly problematic** for the following reasons:

Double accounting of renewable electricity

- The same renewable generation is often claimed simultaneously under location-based and market-based accounting, leading to systematic double-accounting and double-marketing.

Misallocation of financial flows

- Since fossil-fuel-based electricity can be marketed as "green" in the existing system, it has the same sales opportunities as truly renewable electricity. Accordingly, green electricity tariffs continue to mainly sell fossil-fuel-based electricity. As a result, the majority of payments for so-called "green electricity" continue to flow into the fossil fuel industry. The price of guarantees of origin is marginal in relation to the price of electricity and has no real steering effect .

No reliable reduction of fossil fuel use

- Accounting-based green electricity does not reduce fossil electricity generation in practice, and does not support the expansion of renewables.

False sense of completion

- Electricity procured in this way is frequently treated as "climate neutral", which reduces efforts to pursue impactful solutions such as on-site generation or direct supply contracts.

A credible climate strategy needs to move beyond current GO-based green electricity accounting.

Solution 1: Get real green electricity

First of all, we must stop accounting green electricity as emissions reduced, as long as double accounting is not effectively prevented. Following that, several solution pathways are available to reliably procure and support renewable electricity:

This building at THU produces 126 % of its electricity demand with PV-Systems.

On-site generation is the most reliable option. It is additional, verifiable, directly manageable, and can offer strong economic performance with short amortization periods. Third-party-services can be useful here, when own funds are too limited.

Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) provide strong and direct support for renewable energy generation by contractually linking the consumer to specific renewable power plants. Unlike standard tariffs, PPAs ensure that capital is directed toward identified renewable projects, providing the long-term price signals that are necessary for market expansion.

The University & Uni-Clinic of Tübingen have concluded a PPA with the municipal utilities, which covers app. 3 % of their electricity demand.

Direct marketing and contractual coupling is used by selected energy utilities that **solely source from renewable** production through own generation or supply contracts. Therefore, they can provide a contractual coupling, meaning that GOs and the traded electricity come from the same renewable power plant. This approach provides significant benefits: It supports renewable producers with stable revenue and guaranteed offtake. By creating market-based revenue streams, it reduces reliance on EEG subsidies so these funds can support new renewable capacity instead. Greenwashing is reduced as GOs cannot be sold separately to label fossil-generated power as green. Finally, accounting group traceability ensures that only renewably produced electricity is traded, making claims of emission reduction through this procurement much more comprehensive. Note that even direct supply contracts involve hedging and swapping mechanisms, which induce payments to the fossil industry. The extent of this practice varies between providers and highlights the current system constraints, particularly limited storage capacity.

GRÜNER STROM
Das Ökostromlabel der Umweltverbände

Grüner Strom Label is the only electricity certificate that guarantees contractual coupling and exclusive procurement from renewable production. Furthermore, certified utilities are required to invest a certain amount per kWh into new renewable projects. This amplifies the expansion of renewables even more!

We also recommend the Ökostrom-Report by Robin Wood, which assessed utilities for exclusive renewable energy trading and additional investments into new renewable production.

The **University of Göttingen** has decided to opt out from purely GO-based procurement and chose to cover their grid demand exclusively through a Grüner Strom Label-certified tariff. The **KHSB** actually covers all of its electricity demand with a certified tariff.

Solution 2: Help fixing the system

The trading and accounting system for renewable electricity is flawed and clearly **requires further development.** Universities, as knowledge generators and integral parts of public administration, can **play a key role in accelerating necessary reforms.** For example, researchers at TU Berlin published an influential study on the relevance of 24/7 carbon free electricity. Now it's time to implement it! Here's what to do:

1. Prevent Double-Counting
Double-accounting through simultaneous market-based and location-based accounting must be eliminated. While both approaches are legitimate on their own, their parallel existence creates a fundamental conflict.
When a university chooses one approach, it should ensure that the same renewable attributes are not claimed elsewhere through the other approach. For example, this condition is violated when Norwegian GOs are used, since Norway's national emissions accounting relies on the location-based approach. The same renewable electricity effectively gets counted twice: once by Norway and once by the purchasing institution. This does nothing for the climate.
We generally support and recommend the market-based approach because it links purchasing decisions directly to renewable suppliers, enabling institutions to actively drive the energy transition rather than passively consuming the grid average. However, this approach is only credible once the necessary reforms are in place.

2. Introduce more Granular Guarantees of Origin
The most crucial reform is the increasing the temporal granularity of GOs. Hourly matching requires consumers to hold Guarantees of Origin for every hour of the day, not just annual volumes. This must be combined with geographic closeness to comprehensively match input and output. As the UN notes, 24/7 renewable procurement is "both the end state of a fully decarbonized electricity system, and a transformative approach to energy procurement, supply, and policy design that is critical to accelerating its arrival." Importantly, hourly matching also creates strong economic incentives for building large-scale energy storage systems, which are crucial for a fully fossil-free grid.

Breaking News: Germany's First 24/7 Tariff is Now Available
Just days before completing this report, LichtBlick and Granular Energy launched the first commercially available 24/7 tariff in Germany with hourly matching. This is a breakthrough: what we call for in this report is now market reality, available to universities today.
Now the German Guarantee of Origin Register (HKNR) must follow suit in order to establish hourly matching as the minimum standard for labeling grid-based green electricity as soon as possible.

As soon as hourly GOs become established and scalably available, these will become the minimum requirement for registration as a Fossil Free Zone.

VARYING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PROCUREMENT

CHALLENGE

An additional layer of complexity arises from centralized procurement structures. In most federal states, universities are supplied with "green electricity" through the federal administration. These usually have weak criteria for "green electricity" regarding the origin, age, or additionality of renewable generation, resulting in little to no real climate impact. Some universities account the electricity as emissions reduced nonetheless, while others are more critical. In either case, universities frequently claim to have no real influence on the electricity procurement. This makes federal state administrations a central actor in developing better solutions to the described problems. The following table provides an overview of the federal states' procurement structures.

Baden-Wurttemberg: Electricity procurement is handled centrally by the Asset and Construction Management Department (VBV) of the Ministry of Finance for all non-university higher education institutions. Universities can participate on a voluntary basis. GOs must be bought from plants that are no more than 20 years old.	**Bavaria:** Electricity procurement is handled centrally by the Bavarian State Office for Construction and Transport (LBV) and is used by all state universities, but is formally voluntary. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.
Berlin: The structure of electricity procurement for universities is not clearly documented publicly. Information on responsibilities or criteria for green electricity is not available in a transparent manner.	**Brandenburg:** Centralized electricity procurement is offered by the Brandenburg State Agency for Real Estate and Construction (BLB) and used voluntarily by several universities. It currently procures all electricity from one utility. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.
Bremen: Universities procure electricity independently.	**Hamburg:** Electricity procurement is carried out centrally by the Authority for Environment, Climate, Energy, and Agriculture (BUKEA) for all state universities with the exception of the BHH. The guarantees of origin must come from plants that are no more than six years old.
Hesse: The State Office for Construction and Real Estate Hesse (LBIH) procures electricity centrally for all state universities as part of the state administration. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.	**Lower Saxony:** Electricity procurement for all state universities is carried out centrally by the Lower Saxony State Office for Construction and Real Estate (NLBL) for all universities (with the exception of the Technical University of Braunschweig, the University of Hanover, the University of Lüneburg, MHH, and the University of Göttingen). The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania: Electricity procurement for all state universities is carried out centrally by the state's Ministry of Finance. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.	**North Rhine-Westphalia**: The Building and Real Estate Management Authority (BLB) centrally supplies 6 of the 11 universities administered by the state. All other public universities in North Rhine-Westphalia procure their own electricity, but some do so jointly. The only criterion for green electricity at the BLB is guarantees of origin.
Rhineland-Palatinate: The State Property and Construction Management Agency (LBB) procures electricity centrally for all state universities in Rhineland-Palatinate (with the exception of the University of Mainz). Additional criteria for HKN were discussed but not implemented.	**Saarland:** The State Building Authority (SHB) procures electricity centrally for some universities, while Saarland University and Homburg University Hospital procure independently. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.
Saxony-Anhalt: The Saxony-Anhalt Construction and Real Estate Agency (BLSA) offers central electricity procurement for universities, which is used on a voluntary basis. An overview of participants is not publicly available. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.	**Saxony:** The Saxon Real Estate and Construction Management (SIB) procures electricity centrally for all state universities (with the exception of the Zittau-Görlitz University of Applied Sciences) via framework agreements. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.
Schleswig-Holstein: The universities procure electricity independently.	**Thuringia:** The Thuringian State Office for Construction and Transport (TLBV) procures electricity centrally for all state universities in the state. The only criterion for green electricity is guarantees of origin.

SOLUTIONS

Individual and Collective Pathways

The best procurement strategy clearly depends on the local conditions and legal structures across federal states. Where procurement is centralized, universities should address the issue collectively. If systemic solutions are blocked, universities can find individual solutions, e.g. by making use of their institutional autonomy or property rights. Furthermore, universities can collaborate in voluntary joint procurement initiatives, to reduce administrative efforts while increasing financial advantages.

A growing network of 21 Universities in North Rhine-Westphalia procures "green" electricity collectively, managed by TH Köln and KoBa NRW.

MISLEADING SUSTAINABILITY CLAIMS

CHALLENGE

Not every alternative constitutes a meaningful solution. Across the analysis, several approaches were repeatedly described as sustainable, often implying that no further transformation would be needed. Most notably, (1) fossil gas usage, (2) combined heat and power (CHP) systems, and (3) district heating are often framed as sufficiently sustainable, which ignores crucial underlying problems:

1. Fossil gas is not a "climate-friendly" solution
Fossil gas has been defended as "cleaner pollution" as it emits less CO_2 than coal. However, life cycle assessments show that LNG from the U.S. emits more CO2eq than coal! Extraction practices like fracking imply large intentional methane release, and harms local environments and communities. As a finite resource it is linked to dangerous dependencies and geopolitical conflicts. Nobody can dispute that it is a fossil fuel that adds carbon to the atmosphere that would otherwise remain underground.

2. Efficiency gains of CHPs may perpetuate fossil dependency
CHP systems increase efficiency, which is great, but commonly run on fossil fuels nonetheless. This perpetuates institutions' reliance on and support for fossil fuel use.

CHPs can and should run on renewable sources, as demonstrated by Leuphana University.

3. District heating is not automatically sustainable
District heating is often assumed to be climate-friendly by default, yet its climate impact depends entirely on the underlying energy sources. In many cases, it is based on burning waste, local electricity generation or industrial waste heat, all of which use fossil fuels. Especially waste incineration creates long-term demand for combustible waste, namely plastic, which reinforces fossil extraction rather than reducing it.

SOLUTIONS

Real solutions should be fossil-free, efficient and sustainably sourced.
Priority should be given to **non-finite renewable energy** sources such as wind, solar, hydro or geothermal energy. Those can unfold their potential through broad electrification, heat pumps and storage systems. Implementation may take place through on-site generation or direct procurement via PPAs. **Cooperation with local partners**, such as the municipal utilities or neighboring institutions can foster implementation.

Finite renewable energies such as biogas or biomass have limited availability and cannot serve as universal solutions for everyone. But local conditions matter and if the procurement of the raw materials follows high sustainability standards, those are fair solutions for renewable energy supply.

Efficiency gains and retrofits are essential supporting measures. But, they do not compensate the necessity to replace fossil fuels.

CLIMATE NEUTRALITY COULD UNDERMINE THE TRANSITION

CHALLENGE

Climate neutrality targets are widespread among German universities. Whether self-imposed or mandated by federal state climate laws, these targets often rely on offsetting. However, **offsetting reduces incentives** to pursue real emissions reductions. Several universities already claim climate neutrality while continuing to burn fossil fuels. The practice of "compensating" emissions after they occur rather than avoiding them at their source, obscures reality: **(1) Global sink capacity is already overstretched and urgently needed to remove existing atmospheric CO2, not to justify new fossil emissions.** (2) Justifications are often based on the notion of "unavoidable emissions", yet what is considered "unavoidable" remains poorly defined. (3) Compensation projects are very often found to be ineffective.

Revealed: more than 90 % of rainforest carbon offsets by biggest certifier are worthless, analysis shows
-
The Guardian

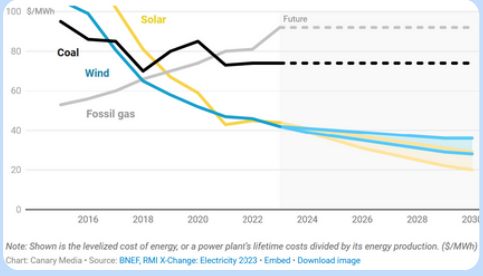
SOLUTION

Fossil-free operation provides a clearer and more effective goal. It should replace or accompany existing climate neutrality targets to make them credible. Aiming for fossil-freedom addresses the root cause and eliminates emissions instead of offsetting emissions after the fact. It remains transparent and easier to verify and makes infrastructural change tangible.

SHORT-SIGHTED BUDGETING PREVENTS LONG TERM SAVINGS

CHALLENGE

A lack of financial resources is the most frequently mentioned barrier to the fossil-free transition. Public universities depend on state budgets, that are limited and contested, which can prolong major infrastructure upgrades. This often gets justified by a narrow interpretation of § 97(1) GWB which mandates "economic efficiency and proportionality." However, a narrow focus on the lowest upfront price **ignores the long-term costs** of fossil fuels, rising CO2 prices under ETS-II, mandatory offsetting fees, and escalating climate damages. Decisions based on short-term savings will lead to massive future expenditures and stranded assets. **The sunk cost-trap:** Recent investments in unsustainable infrastructure, such as gas-fired CHP systems or new boilers, create a psychological and financial barrier to change. Reluctance to admit that these decisions were suboptimal leads to a "sunk-cost fallacy," where actors cling to failing fossil assets rather than initiating the urgent shift to renewables.



SOLUTIONS

The fossil-free **transition is a cost-saving strategy**, not an additional expense. To see this, cost assessments must shift from upfront expenditures to life-cycle accounting. This approach is **legally grounded,** as § 97(1) GWB requirement for "economic proportionality" can only be met when the future costs are rightfully part of the equation. Furthermore, § 97(3) GWB mandates public procurement to consider environmental and social aspects. Thus, a **long-term perspective** must be established which incentivizes increased investments to enable **long term savings.** Nonetheless, when public budgets fall short, universities can find individual solutions: Models like PV-as-a-service, heat pump leasing, and PPAs **shift the investment burden to third parties** while ensuring predictable costs and verified renewable supply. Several universities were successful in combining infrastructure upgrades with applied research or pilot-projects to unlock project based funding and scientific progress simultaneously. Ultimately, investments are a matter of priority. If sustainability is a core value in teaching and research, it should become visible on the campus itself. This turns declared values into visible credibility.

Umweltcampus Birkenfeld has renewable heating and remained unaffected by the gas shortage and price-increase during the energy crisis 2021/22.

GOVERNANCE OF CHANGE MUST BE INSTITUTIONALIZED

CHALLENGE

The transformation requires strategic backing at the highest institutional level, but also careful preparation and sustained management throughout the implementation. A frequently mentioned issue was lacking support from the university leadership. On the other hand, insufficient capacities to plan and implement transition strategies were also mentioned. While positions such as climate protection managers or Green Offices are becoming more and more established, these units often lack adequate resources and capacities or are insufficiently integrated into decision-making processes.

SOLUTIONS

To move from ambition to implementation, universities must institutionalize strong **transition governance.** Based on our exchange with practitioners, we recommend four key aspects.

1. University leadership must acknowledge their institution's role model function and turn strategic intent into decisive implementation.
2. Climate Protection Managers or Green Offices should be integrated into high-level decision-making processes, equipped with review rights and adequate resources. Thus, they serve as a central "bridge-builder", rather than acting as an isolated unit.
3. Existing facility management departments can move beyond maintenance toward active recommendation and implementation.
4. Interdisciplinary steering committees can help establish a whole-institution approach.

UNIVERSITIES HAVE SYSTEMIC CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

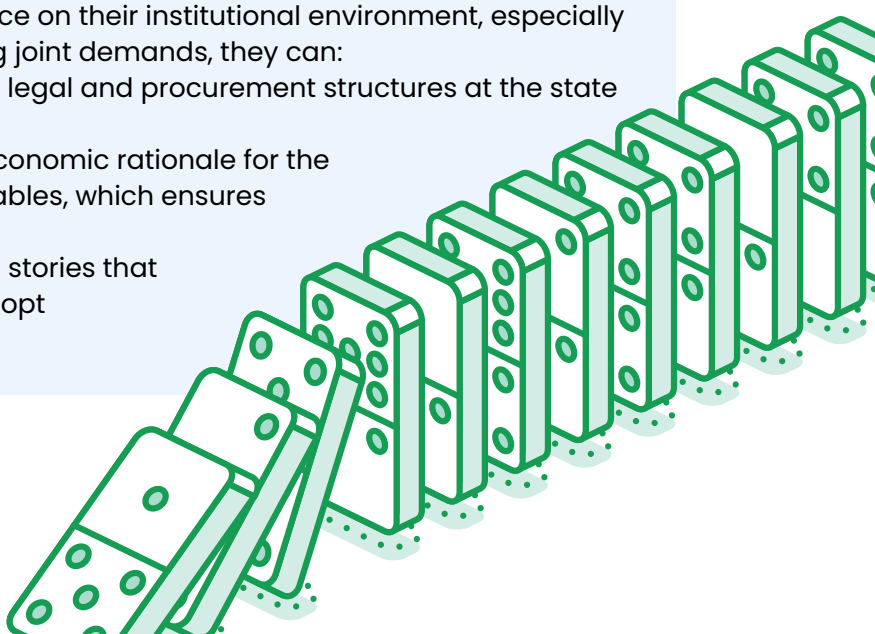
CHALLENGE

Universities are embedded in rigid public administration structures. Despite formal autonomy, their freedom of action is often limited by state-level regulatory frameworks, budget allocations, and procurement structures. Bureaucratic structures can significantly slow down and complicate the transformation process.

SOLUTIONS

This same embeddedness allows universities to **act as hotspots for systemic change.** Institutions can exert significant influence on their institutional environment, especially when acting collectively. By formulating joint demands, they can:

- Reform Policies: Push for changes in legal and procurement structures at the state level.
- Secure Investments: Highlight the economic rationale for the budgets needed to invest in renewables, which ensures long-term saving and stability.
- Drive Spillover: Create local success stories that incentivize the broader public to adopt fossil-free standards.



Conclusion

This report has shown that Fossil Free Zones at German universities are **necessary, feasible, and already emerging**. Yet fossil fuel dependence remains high, revealing a gap between intention and impact. This underlines the necessity for universities to **adopt a complete fossil phase-out strategy** to make climate action efforts truly meaningful and exemplary. We identified common challenges and recurring fallacies but also field-tested solutions on the technical, economic and systemic level that show the way out and to become a

Fossil Free University. Who will be the first?

What universities can do now:

1. Become a Fossil Free Zone in Transition: Establish a clear, transformative standard with binding targets.

2. Gradual implementation on campus: Create and register Fossil Free Zones one by one. Every zone matters!

3. Collectively demand better conditions: Actively demand the necessary investments in renewable energies, a functioning electricity labeling system, and legal conditions that promote transformation.

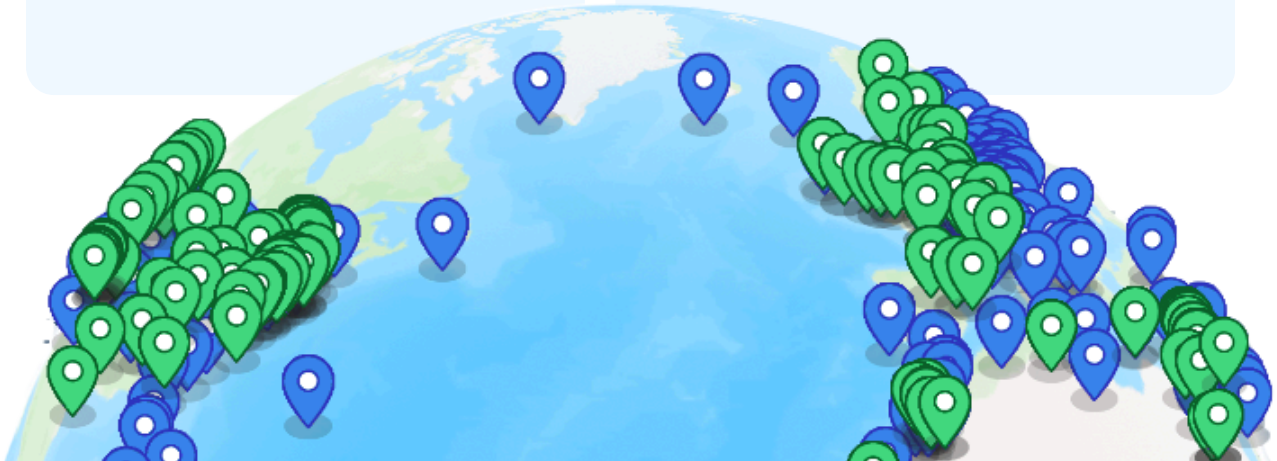
Get registered & Join the Family

GOALS ACHIEVED?

Register your
Fossil Free Zone

GOALS SET?

Register your
Fossil Free Zone in Transition



REACH OUT

We thank you for your interest and engagement.
A fossil-free world is possible and you can help to accelerate it.
Reach out - we look forward to hearing from you.

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