

Sharing Information on Progress 2026

ZHAW School of Management
and Law

September 2026

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About the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)

The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) is a United Nations-supported initiative founded in 2007 that aims to raise the profile of sustainability in their classrooms through Seven Principles focused on serving society and safeguarding our planet.

PRME engages business and management schools to ensure they provide future leaders with the skills needed to balance economic and sustainability goals, while drawing attention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aligning academic institutions with the work of the UN Global Compact. Driven by its mission to transform management education, PRME equips today's business students with the understanding and ability to deliver change tomorrow. As a voluntary initiative with over 800 signatories worldwide, PRME has become the largest organized relationship between the United Nations and management-related higher education institutions.



“*The PRME initiative was launched to nurture responsible leaders of the future. Never has this task been more important. Bold leadership and innovative thinking are needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

Antonio Guterres

Secretary-General (2017 - Present)

United Nations

”

Principles of PRME



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.



Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.



Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.



Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all – laying out a path over the next 15 years to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet. At the heart of Agenda 2030 are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 related targets that address the most important economic, social, environmental and governance challenges of our time. The SDGs clearly define the world we want – applying to all nations and leaving no one behind. Successful implementation of the SDGs will require all players to champion this agenda; the role of higher education is critical to this.





Getting Started

This section provides foundational information about ZHAW School of Management and Law, including key details and basic institutional data.

Mission



School of
Management and Law

Mission Statement

Effective: 10 September 2018

We deliver innovative, interdisciplinary and intellectually challenging education in management, economics and law, enabling our graduates to compete successfully in the domestic and international environment.

We contribute to the success of private and public sector enterprises and organizations through research, continuing education and consulting.

We practice and actively promote sustainable development and corporate responsibility.

Our highly qualified faculty and staff utilize their expertise to advance knowledge and practice in areas most relevant to our stakeholders.

Rooted in the Zurich metropolitan area we cultivate strong national and international alliances and partnerships.



Vision



School of
Management and Law

Vision Statement

Our educational programs and our research in management and law enable entrepreneurial activity and contribute to resolving social challenges. We stand for Swiss excellence with a global reach.

Finalized at the 15th Executive Committee Meeting of 20 September 2018



Strategy

Strategic Pillars of ZHAW SML



Strategy Alignment

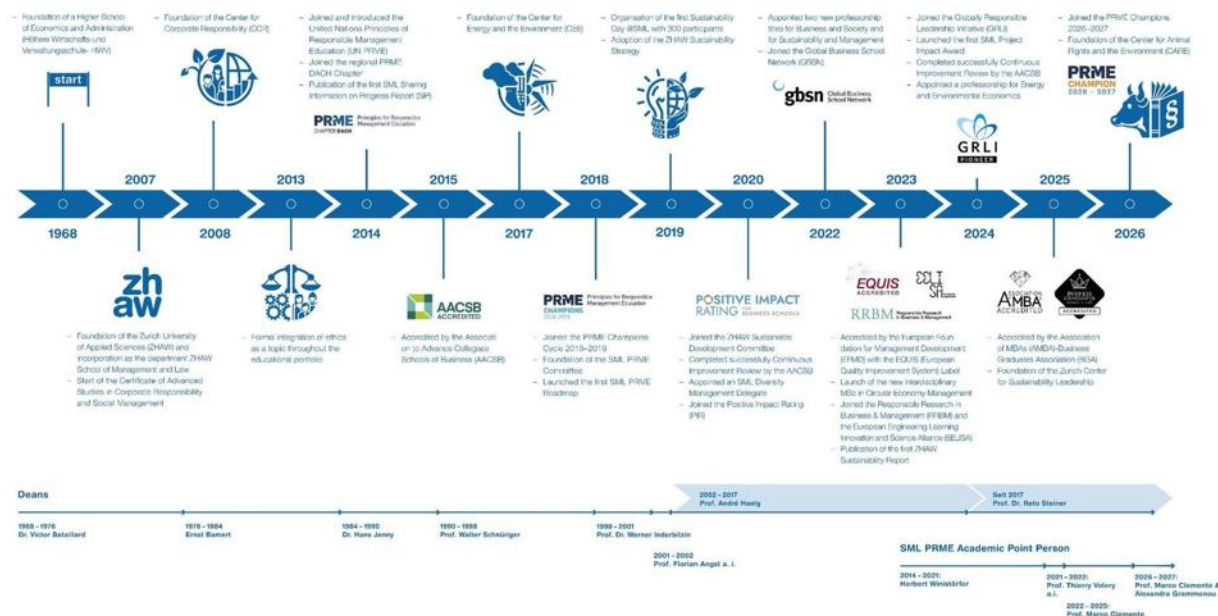
Our Core Values



Institutional History

History of RME in ZHAW SML

History of the ZHAW School of Management and Law 1968-2026



Detailed graph of major events contributing to the evolution of RME in ZHAW SML

ZHAW School of Management and Law was founded first in **1968** under the name "Höhere Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungsschule (HWV)" as an educational institution for business and administration, with the aim of offering business people academically sound education and continuing education. Initially, it offered only a degree program leading to a "Diplom-Betriebsökonom," namely a **diploma in Business Administration**. In **1996**, the institution moved to **Winterthur** and was renamed the **Zurich Higher School of Economics and Administration (HWV)** Winterthur. In **1998**, the HWV merged with the Technikum Winterthur and became the **Department of Economics and Management**, or the School of Management, at the **Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur (ZHAW)**. In **2007**, the **School of Management** became one of a total of eight departments at the newly founded **ZHAW**. In **2008**, the department was renamed the **School of Management and Law (SML)**. Since **2024**, the SML has been the ZHAW department **with the highest number of students**.

2007: The ZHAW SML launches the first **Certificate of Advanced Studies in Corporate Responsibility and Social Management** directed to senior business managers who needed to update themselves in this emerging topic. The certificate was one of the **first professional degrees of its kind** across Switzerland and runs successfully ever since with a total of **239 graduates** from **2007-2026**, coming from different disciplines, industries and firm sizes.

2008: The **Center for Corporate Responsibility (CCR)** is founded under the leadership of **Dr. Herbert Winistörfer**.

2013: Under the guidance of **Prof. Mathias Schüz**, a former **integration of business ethics** takes place throughout the educational portfolio.

2014: ZHAW SML becomes a **UN PRME signatory** and joins officially the regional **PRME DACH Chapter**. The Center for Corporate Responsibility publishes the **first ZHAW SML Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) Report**. Dr. Herbert Winistörfer is appointed PRME Academic Point Person.

2015: Successful accreditation of the ZHAW SML by the **AACSB**.

2017: Prof. Reto Steiner is appointed **Dean of ZHAW SML**. The **Center for Energy and the Environment (CEE)** is founded under the leadership of **Prof. Regina Betz**.

2018: ZHAW SML joins for the first time the **PRME Champions cycle 2018-2019**, working with other leading business schools for the advancement of Responsible Management Education. ZHAW remains a **dedicated PRME Champions school ever since**. PRME becomes embedded in the institution's governance with the official **foundation of the SML PRME Committee**. The Center for Corporate Responsibility organizes an internal research project to map the integration of PRME topics and the SDGs into the curriculum. Marie-Christine Weber, research associate takes over the role of **SML PRME Coordinator**.

2019: The Bachelor's students organize the **first Sustainability Day @ SML**, an annual event with goal to bring awareness and foster dialogue around the SDGs bring together students, businesses and faculty. The event attracts **300 participants** and has been organized successfully by different cohort of students ever since focusing on multiple topics and different SDGs.

2020: The **Positive Impact Rating (PIR)** survey runs for the first time by ZHAW SML students. At university level, there is a newly launched **ZHAW Sustainable Development Committee**, where SML becomes an active member, fostering dialogue for sustainability across ZHAW departments. **AACSB reaccredits SML** for the second time. SML joins the **PRME Champions cycle 2020-2021**.

2022: The Center for Corporate Responsibility welcomes **two new professors** as co- leaders, **Marco Clemente**, Professor Sustainability and Management and **Christian Voegtlin**, Professor Business and Society. ZHAW SML joins the **Global Business School Network (GBSN)**. **Prof. Marco Clemente** is appointed PRME Academic Point Person and **Alexandra Grammenou** serves as SML PRME Coordinator.

2023: ZHAW SML receives its **second accreditation** by the **European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) with the EQUIS label**. The school also joins the **Responsible Research in Business Management (RRBM)** and the **European Engineering Learning Innovation and Science Alliance (EELISA)**. At university level, the **first ZHAW Sustainability Report** is published. The school joins the **PRME Champions cycle 2023**.

2024: ZHAW SML gets **AACSB accredited** for the **third time**. The school appoints a professorship for Energy and Environmental Economics to **Dr. Paula Monica Castro Pareja**. A new partnership is launched with the **Global Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI)**. The school joins the **PRME Champions cycle 2024-2025**.

2025: The **Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership** is newly launched including the Corporate Responsibility Lab (previous Center for Corporate Responsibility), People, Technology and Governance Lab, and Circular Economy Lab employing **12 researchers** and **teaching staff**. ZHAW SML successfully receives its **third accreditation from AMBA - Business Graduates Association (BGA)**, becoming a **triple crown business school**.

2026: ZHAW SML joins the **PRME Champions cycle 2026-2027** for the fifth time becoming a front runner in embedding RME in curriculum, research and practice. The **Center for Animal Rights and the Environment (CARE)** is launched under the leadership of **Prof. Saskia Stucki** bringing progress through research projects dedicated to SDG 15- Life on Land. **Alexandra Grammenou** co-leads the position of PRME Academic Point Person together with **Prof. Marco Clemente**.

Graduates & Enrollment

2025 Statistics	Number
Graduates	3786
Faculty & Staff at the University	3729
Faculty & Staff at the Institution	645
Student Enrollment at the University	25995
Student Enrollment at the Institution	9507

2025 Statistics	Number
Undergraduate Attendance	4210
Masters-Level Postgraduate Attendance	1063
Doctoral Student Attendance	43
Certificate, Professional Development, or Continuing Education Attendance	4234

Degrees Offered

Bachelor Programs

-  Bachelor of Science (B.Sc. or B.S.)
-  Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.)

Masters Programs

-  Master of Science (M.Sc. or M.S.)
-  Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.)

Additional

-  Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS)
-  Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS)

Undergraduate Degree Programmes

-  Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
-  Bachelor's Degree in International Management
-  Bachelor's Degree in Business Information Technology
-  Bachelor's Degree in Business Law
-  Bachelor's Degree in Applied Law

Masters Degree Programmes

-  Masters of Science in Circular Economy Management
-  Masters of Science in International Business
-  Masters of Science in Banking and Finance

Certificates, Professional Development, or Associate Programmes

- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Managing Diversity, Inclusion and Social Sustainability
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Managing Circular Economy
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Sustainable Innovation
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Circular Economy Marketing
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Sustainable Investing
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Corporate Finance and Sustainability
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Biodiversity Strategies
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Environmental Law
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies New Energy Economy
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability Strategy
- 🔖 Certificate of Advanced Studies Climate Strategies



Purpose

We advance responsible management education to foster inclusive prosperity in a world of thriving ecosystems.

Letter of Commitment



School of
Management and Law

Letter from the Dean

The ZHAW School of Management and Law is committed to advancing responsible management education (RME) by promoting positive societal impact. We achieve this by excellence in research and through multiple partnerships with Swiss and other international organizations. Our priority is to continue advancing the 17 SDGs and providing solutions to address the huge challenges the world faces.



At the ZHAW SML, ethics, corporate responsibility, and sustainability are far more than words on a page or screen. They are woven into the daily practice of our business school, shaping how we teach and conduct our research, what questions we ask, and the way we prepare our students to be responsible leaders in a changing world.

With the start of the new PRME Champions 2026/2027 cycle, we reaffirm our dedication to this United Nations initiative and to the collaborations it fosters with leading business schools worldwide, which continue to inspire the further integration of the SDGs into our programs. This year, we are especially proud to announce the foundation of our new Center for Animal Rights and the Environment (CARE), marking a decisive step in strengthening our focus on SDG 15 – Life on Land. Building on this momentum, we have launched our first Certificate of Advanced Studies in Biodiversity Strategies, equipping senior leaders with the tools to place nature and biodiversity at the heart of business decision-making. Our annual Sustainability Day once again brought ZHAW students and staff together to reflect on these themes, deepening the dialogue on interdisciplinarity and the natural world.

These commitments are increasingly reflected in our curricula as we expand the number of mandatory SDG-related modules across our teaching programs. As part of this drive, our Bachelor's in Business Administration will offer a new course this year titled "Sustainable Economy and Politics," which connects economic thinking with the political and ecological realities that shape today's markets. We are also focused on transforming the classroom environment to create an innovative, unique learning experience on campus.

In addition to all this, we are proud to have established a new partnership with the American University of Cairo (AUC) Onsi Sawiris School of Business, Egypt's leading business school. This collaboration will enable our students to experience different markets, cultures, and business environments first-hand, while connecting ideas, people, and perspectives across European and African borders. As we continue to develop in the field of RME, we look forward to contributing to the new ONE Global Compact Strategy, thereby strengthening the collaboration between UN Global Compact Switzerland and Liechtenstein and Swiss PRME signatory business schools.

It is with great pleasure and pride that I present the eighth PRME SIP Report, showcasing our work at the ZHAW SML during the 2025/2026 academic year. I hope this provides a basis for inspiration and an ongoing dialogue to advance the 17 SDGs in business education and research across the PRME Community.

Professor Reto Steiner
Dean, ZHAW School of Management and Law



Definition of Purpose

ZHAW SML educates students to become the next generation of responsible leaders. Through research, curricula, and campus practice grounded in sustainability, responsibility, and ethical inquiry, SML develops the critical judgment, systems thinking, and moral courage graduates need to make decisions that address the needs of all stakeholders.

Institutional Engagement

51% - 75% of faculty at ZHAW School of Management and Law actively contribute to our work with PRME, advancing responsible management education, or addressing sustainable development challenges through their work.

Continue telling your story

SML PRME Committee

Since **2018** the SML PRME Committee meets **twice per year** to discuss important topics on the integration of the SDGs across the school and define the SML PRME Roadmap.

For the **2025/2026** academic year, the members of the committee are the following:

1. Chair

Professor Jens Lehne

Vice Dean and Head of Department Business Law

2. PRME Academic Point Person

Alexandra Grammenou

Lecturer and Research Associate, Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership

3. Research Focus Corporate Responsibility Management

Professor Christian Voegtlin

Co- head of Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership

4. Research Focus Business Ethics

Professor Marco Clemente

Co- head of Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership; PRME Academic Point Person

5. Research Focus Energy Decarbonization and Transformation

Professor Regina Betz

Head of Center for Energy and the Environment, Department Public Sector

6. Research Focus Energy Decarbonization and Transformation

Dr. Yann Blumer

Senior Lecturer Center for Innovation Systems, Department General Management

7. Research Focus Sustainable Finance

Professor Beat Affolter

Head of Center for Corporate Performance and Sustainable Financing, Department Banking & Finance

8. Research Focus Circular Economy Management

Dr. Abhishek Chaudhary

Senior Lecturer, Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership

9. Research Focus Diversity and Human Rights

Dr. Daniela Frau

SML Diversity Management Delegate; Senior Lecturer, Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership

10. Research Focus Social Law

Karin Mulchi

Lecturer and Research Associate, Institute of Business Law, Department Business Law

11. Representative Department of Operations and Services

Jörg Wendel

Head of Department Operations and Services; Representative of SML in the ZHAW Degree Programs Commission

12. Representative for the Dean's Office

Joan Barbara Werner

Quality & Accreditations Manager

13. Communications

Christian Busenhardt

Head of SML Communications

14. Representative for the Faculty Assembly

Dr. Michale Jüttler

Senior Lecturer, Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning

15. Representative for the Junior Faculty Assembly

Dr. Kevin Andermatt

Lecturer and Research Associate, President of the Junior Faculty Assembly

16. Representative for the Delegate Assembly of Students

Lazar Tomasevic

Master's student in Business Administration

All contact details of the committee members [can be found here.](#)



Values

We place organizational responsibility and accountability to society and the planet at the core of what we do.



How We Define Values

At ZHAW SML, we define our PRME values through concrete research specializations linked to the SDGs: Business Ethics, Sustainable Finance, Diversity and Human Rights, Corporate Responsibility, Management, Social Law, Energy Transformation and Decarbonization, and Circular Economy, turning global principles into applied, discipline-specific academic commitments.

Who Champions Responsible Management Education at Our Institution

- ❖ Individual leader
- ❖ Interdisciplinary efforts across business school
- ❖ Interdisciplinary efforts across parent organization
- ❖ Research or issue group, society, or club leading sustainability efforts

Student Voices

The following narratives demonstrate how ZHAW School of Management and Law has influenced students' academic journey and personal growth.

Bachelor's Student Voice Juliette Weber

Testimonial Bachelor's International Management- Juliette Weber (2023-2026)



"Before starting my bachelor's at SML, I already had a strong interest in sustainability, though I mainly associated it with environmental issues. Throughout the study program, I developed a broader understanding, recognizing that sustainability also includes people, communities, and responsible business practices. This has been one of the most valuable lessons from my studies.

What stood out to me was that sustainability was not treated as a separate topic but was consistently integrated across many courses. Discussions emphasized balancing economic performance with social and environmental responsibility through the triple bottom line approach, helping me understand that responsible management means considering the long-term impact of business decisions on people, the planet, and profit. The program encouraged me to see sustainability as part of ongoing decision-making rather than a standalone objective.

One aspect I particularly appreciated was that learning about sustainability extended beyond lectures. SML created opportunities for students to actively engage with these topics through events, projects, and elective courses. One of these opportunities was Sustainability Day 2024, where I joined the organizing team in my first year at SML. Being involved in the creation of this event allowed me to apply the principles of responsible management beyond the classroom by collaborating with students and exploring how different stakeholders can contribute to meaningful change. Furthermore, courses such as "Corporate Responsibility" and "Business and Human Rights" gave me the chance to explore sustainability from different angles. In particular, "Business and Human Rights" broadened my understanding of how sustainability and human rights are interconnected and highlighted the responsibilities organizations carry throughout their global supply chains.

I am grateful that sustainability was such a central theme throughout my studies. SML strengthened my existing interest while helping me build a more comprehensive understanding of responsible management's role in business decision-making, a perspective that will continue to guide me in my future academic and professional journey."

Master's Student Voice Vidhi Joshi

Testimonial Master's International Business- Vidhi Joshi (2025-2026)



"When I started my Master's in International Business at ZHAW SML, I thought of responsibility mainly in terms of ethics and good intentions, and what it meant to be a "good" company. Over time, courses such as "Strategic Management" and "Risk Management" challenged that view. They showed me that business decisions rarely have one clear answer and that their consequences extend far beyond financial performance.

This became even clearer as I worked on my master's thesis, which explores how leaders make decisions during cyber crises, situations where information is incomplete, uncertainty is high, and time is limited. Through this research, I came to see that responsibility is not simply a checklist of principles to follow. More often, it involves making thoughtful decisions under pressure, balancing competing priorities, and accepting that there may not be a perfect solution.

Volunteering at ZHAW Sustainability Day 2026 reinforced this perspective. Through conversations with students, academics, and practitioners, I experienced first-hand how sustainability is shaped by diverse perspectives and competing priorities. Rather than seeing disagreement as an obstacle, I began to appreciate it as an essential part of responsible decision-making. Those discussions showed me that meaningful progress often comes from engaging with different viewpoints rather than searching for a single "correct" answer.

Looking back, the biggest change in me is not that I have found all the answers, but that I have become more comfortable asking better questions. ZHAW SML has given me not only the academic knowledge to think critically about responsible management, but also the confidence to approach difficult decisions with curiosity, openness, and a deeper awareness of different perspectives."

PhD Student Voice Adina Arth

Testimonial PhD student in Management - Adina Arth (2024-ongoing)



"My research is motivated by the question: How can we achieve sustainability and protect nature by addressing the roots of unsustainability? This passion has shaped my academic path, professional choices, and decision to join SML. After my bachelor's degree in ecology and nature conservation, I

pursued a master's in sustainability science to understand the societal and economic drivers of environmental degradation. Working with NGOs, companies, science-policy organisations, and at UN level showed me that transformation must happen at several levels. It depends on how individuals relate to others and the natural world, their role in shaping organisations, and the economic conditions that enable or constrain change.

I am therefore excited to explore pathways towards sustainability transformations as a doctoral researcher at the ZHAW School of Management and Law and PhD candidate at the University of St. Gallen. My research on responsible leadership examines how individuals in organisations engage stakeholders and shape organisational practices within planetary boundaries. My wider research addresses business–biodiversity relations and interconnected global challenges. I am deeply grateful for my supervisors, who are outstanding researchers, generous mentors, and in fact role models of responsible leadership themselves. They support my personal and academic development and give me freedom to pursue questions I care about.

SML's combination of academic rigour and applied orientation strengthens my commitment to making research useful beyond academia. Through our executive education programmes in 'Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability Strategy' and 'Biodiversity Strategies', I can bring research into dialogue with experienced practitioners and help translate it into organisational decisions. This outward-looking culture also creates space for engagement with policy and society. I am grateful that SML supports my engagement with policy and society, including within the Swiss Young Academy, a network for early-career researchers at science-policy interfaces, and the German Environmental Award jury. These experiences reinforce my conviction that progress towards sustainability requires connecting ecological limits with research on leadership and implementation in practice and policy."

Values Voices

ZHAW Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership

[ZHAW Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership](#) embeds the values of PRME and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through research, teaching and executive education since its foundation in 2025.

The research center consists of three labs:

- Corporate Responsibility Lab (SDG 9, SDG 11, SDG 16)
- People, Technology & Governance Lab (SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10)
- Circular Economy Lab (SDG 9, SDG 12, SDG 13, SDG 15)

The **Corporate Responsibility Lab (CRL)** supports companies and organizations in the strategic integration of sustainability and corporate responsibility. The team assists in **developing** sustainability strategies, **communicating** their positive impact, and **driving** internal organizational change toward sustainability.

The **Circular Economy Lab (CEL)** is committed to advancing circularity and sustainable innovation with a strategic focus on **manufacturing, machinery, renewable energy, and industrial waste remediation**.

The **People, Technology, and Governance Lab (PTGL)** focuses on the human, social, and ethical aspects of leadership. It bridges the gap between cutting-edge research and practical application, equipping leaders with the tools to **anticipate future challenges** and seize opportunities at the nexus of **people, technology, and governance**.

ZCSL is responsible to lead the PRME initiative across ZHAW SML through PRME Academic Point Persons, **Prof. Marco Clemente** and **Alexandra Grammenou**.



From left to right: Dr. Abhishek Abhishek, Alexandra Grammenou, Nico Pfändler, Prof. Marco Clemente, Adina Arth, Prof. Christian Voegtlin, Regula Broger Marbacher, Dr. Daniela Frau, Dr. Florian Roth, Dr. Sauro Bianchi, Dr. Thorsten Busch, Dr. Gastone Gualtieri
New members (not in the picture): Melanie Garza Guzman, Suban Biixi

Contact info

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[Follow ZCSL in LinkedIn](#)

ZHAW SML PRME Values



At the ZHAW School of Management and Law (SML), researchers are involved in various projects that promote a sustainable and forward-thinking society. The SML has defined seven main research areas, which serve as its core PRME values since it became PRME signatory in 2014:

1. **Business Ethics** - Prof. Marco Clemente, Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership
2. **Circular Economy Management**- Dr. Abhishek Choudhury, Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership
3. **Corporate Responsibility Management**- Prof. Christian Voegtlin, Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership
4. **Diversity & Human Rights**- Dr. Daniela Frau, Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership

- 5. **Energy Transformation & Decarbonisation**- Prof. Regina Betz, Center for Energy & Environment, Dr. Yann Blumer, Center for Innovation Systems
- 6. **Social Law**- Karin Mülchi, Center for Social Law
- 7. **Sustainable Finance**- Prof. Beat Affolter, Center for Corporate Performance & Sustainable Financing

Celebrating Values

The following demonstrates a way in which our institution celebrates values in various specializations.

Celebrating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in ZHAW SML

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are fundamental to a business school that values equal opportunities, participation and academic excellence. We are committed to creating an environment in which everyone can develop their potential, regardless of gender, background or individual circumstances, in alignment with SDG 4, SDG 5, and SDG 10.

This commitment is reflected in concrete initiatives. Our **academic mentorship program** supports women and men who aspire to pursue an academic career as professors, providing guidance and encouragement along their career paths. With the **Gender Equality Management Plan 2025–2028**, we are strengthening our efforts to promote gender equality and equal opportunities across ZHAW SML. At the same time, the launch of a barrier-free university aims to ensure that students and employees with disabilities or chronic illnesses can participate fully in university life and have access to the support they need.

We also believe that DEI needs to be embedded in education and professional development. In Executive Education, I had the pleasure of coordinating the launch of the new **CAS Managing Diversity, Inclusion and Social Sustainability** in fall 2025, providing professionals and leaders with the knowledge and tools to actively shape inclusive organizations. Looking ahead, I am developing a new mandatory module in "**Diversity & Inclusion Management**," which will be offered for the first time in the Bachelor's programme in Business Administration, major in Human Centered Organization in the academic year 2026/27, ensuring that future business managers gain an understanding of diversity and inclusion as an integral part of responsible management.

Our DEI research follows an applied research approach. For example, we investigated the implementation of **Gender Equality Management (GEM)** measures within recruitment processes across Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). We examined how measures designed to **promote equal opportunities in recruitment** and selection are enacted in practice and assessed the extent to which they are implemented across different stages of the selection process. The central

research question asks the extent to which the defined GEM measures are applied within key areas of action and contribute to advancing equal opportunities. Specifically, the analysis focuses on **five dimensions**: (1) job advertising and sourcing, (2) governance structures and the role of diversity within selection committees, (3) selection criteria and decision-making processes, (4) process management and interventions throughout the recruitment process, and (5) the use and integration of GEM-related documents and guidelines.

We are also very pleased to start a new collaboration in 2026 with the **University of South Africa** on a research project funded by the **Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF)**. The project will explore the lived experiences of women school leaders in educational institutions and will focus on how they perceive, navigate, and make sense of their leadership roles in two different cultural contexts: the **district of KwaZulu-Natal** in South Africa and the **Canton of Zurich** in Switzerland.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate our deep commitment to a business school where **diversity is valued in teaching, research, and practice, barriers are actively addressed, and everyone has the opportunity to contribute, learn, and succeed.**



Dr. Daniela Frau
Senior Lecturer & Researcher
ZHAW SML Diversity Management Delegate
Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership
[Contact](#)



Teach

We transform our learning environments by integrating responsible management concepts and practices into our curriculum and pedagogy.



How We Define Teach

We understand teaching as the transformative development of responsible, reflective professionals. Through innovative pedagogies, experiential and problem-based learning methods, case studies, and applied teaching projects with industry partners, we connect theory with practice, enabling students to tackle real-world challenges and develop future competencies needed for responsible leadership in a changing world.

Teaching Awards

In 2025, 1 award was given to faculty and educators at ZHAW School of Management and Law.

SML Learning & Teaching Award

Granter: ZHAW School of Management and Law

Grantee: ZHAW SML Faculty

Award Description:

The ZHAW SML Learning & Teaching Award is one of the school's internal SML Awards, presented annually at the school's Christmas event to recognize outstanding achievement in teaching within the School of Management and Law. It was launched in 2014 alongside a Publication Award, and sits among other SML Awards such as the Best Performing Team Award and Project Impact Award.

The outstanding performance may consist of exemplary teaching methods (particularly those incorporating digital learning) and/or exceptional course content (particularly current and relevant practical applications).

Educator Recognition

At ZHAW School of Management and Law, we recognize educators for quality of teaching in the following ways:

- ❖ Annual teaching excellence awards
- ❖ Course evaluation scores
- ❖ Pedagogical innovation grants
- ❖ Publication or research support

Teaching Voices

The following statements demonstrate ways in which educators at ZHAW School of Management and Law support sustainability and responsible management in their classrooms.

Omid Aschari appointed new Professor of Global Leadership and Strategy

Omid Aschari takes over the professorship "Global Leadership and Strategy" at the ZHAW School of Management and Law starting in autumn 2026. He has proven expertise in leadership, strategy and organizational transformation from his role as senior advisor to the PRME Secretariat in New York, while he was instrumental in setting up one of the world's leading master's programs in the business sector at another university. He combines his many years of experience in academic management and the strategic development of international educational programs with a strong international network. In doing so, he provides important impetus for the SML Master's degree program in International Business as well as for the international orientation of research and teaching at the School of Management and Law.

"The professorship offers me the opportunity to contribute my expertise and experience at the interface of leadership, strategy, transformation and international higher education to teaching, research and practice. In times of far-reaching technological, social and economic changes, practical and at the same time future-oriented management education is of particular importance. I look forward to working with students, colleagues and practice partners to help shape these questions of the future."

– Omid Aschari



Integrating "Living Democracy" into Business Law

The "Living Democracy" learning unit, developed by **Karolina Kuprecht** at SML, encourages and supports students in creating their own democratic structures and actively participating in them through assemblies, discussions, and decision-making.

In the **bachelor's degree in Applied Law**, students practice democracy by drafting statutes, designing meeting invitations, and conducting their own general meetings in a role-playing exercise. In doing so, **they put company law theory into practice**. The focus lies on the democratic elements of associations and cooperatives. **Associations practice democracy on a small scale for idealistic purposes;** cooperatives serve **social entrepreneurship**.

The assignments draw on **real-life situations** and are regularly supplemented with personal contributions from practice partners. The **Pfadi Meilen-Herrliberg association** and the **Glarner Mundart association** have served as practical examples. In the fall semester 2026, students will have the opportunity to work with the **Gemeinschaftsgarten Minga vo Meile** cooperative.



The students of the course during the time of voting.

The "Living Democracy" learning unit was originally developed in the **bachelor's in Business Law program**, where **it has run for 10 years**. Corporations also have important democratic elements. Two to four classes conduct mock general meetings of corporations in the main studies each semester. Students discuss and decide on topics like changes to the board of directors, profit distributions, capital increases and reductions, restructuring, or liquidation. Practice partners have included not only **small and medium-sized enterprises** such as Naturadrinks AG, LerNetz AG, or Akan Goldfields AG, but also **publicly traded companies** such as Zurich Insurance Group AG, or Swiss Re AG.



Students organizing and chairing the general meeting, as part of the course.

The learning unit is challenging because students' theoretical knowledge of company law is **still in its early stages**. The required types of legal documents are specific. Persuasive oral presentations to the entire class are essential. Students must organize and chair the general meeting, present the agenda items, calculate the quorum, draft the minutes and notarial deed, revise the financial statements, present motions, and defend positions. As company members, students may **express their opinions**, challenge the board, and exercise their members' rights. They might prearrange agreements and **form voting groups**. All students in a class are involved, at least when it comes to voting.

With this playful approach, **students not only develop legal and social skills**. They also **learn about democracy** in private law companies, how it works, and how it does not work. Ultimately, **democracy is sustainable only when it is truly alive**.

Dr. Karolina Kuprecht

Senior Lecturer, Attorney-at-Law

Institute of Business Law

[Contact](#)



ClimateTech Summer School 2026

ZHAW makes the city climate-resilient

How can cities like Winterthur and Zurich prepare for hot summers? ZHAW students from different disciplines and from EELISA partner universities explored this question – first in summer 2025 and again this summer in a second edition, following a record-breaking hot summer across European cities. Today, cities are asking not only how they can reduce their CO₂ emissions, but also how they can make urban spaces resilient to extreme weather events. In addition to **heatwaves**, experts anticipate **more frequent storms** and **heavy rainfall**.



The student participants of the ClimateTech Summer School 2026

Increasingly **hot summer days are pushing cities to their limits** – not only in terms of infrastructure, but also in terms of public health. **Moira Trüeb**, a lecturer at the **ZHAW School of Health Sciences**, showed that, for the body, heat means one thing above all: stress on multiple organs. It was not only the **participating students who came from different disciplines; the thematic inputs and field excursions**, where students could directly experience what they had heard in the lecture room, **were interdisciplinary too**.

At the heart of the programme, however, were **project assignments** in which students developed new approaches to real-world challenges: How can Winterthur improve the quality of life in its old town during heatwaves? How can residents of Zurich best be warned about heat episodes and informed about how to behave and where to find nearby, publicly accessible cool places? Most of these challenges go **beyond infrastructure measures**. They call for **creative and innovative thinking**, and ideas already in use in other parts of the world can be a source of inspiration.



Students presenting their project assignments to ZHAW lecturers and public authorities.

After the summer school, **the projects are compiled into a dossier and handed over to the cities**. The summer school has been well received by the cities: in 2025, a representative of the **City of Winterthur** sat on the jury for the final pitching session, and in 2026, a representative of the **City of Zurich** did the same.



Students engaged in interactive discussions with practitioners during the Swiss Green Symposium 2026.

The conclusions from the first summer school were so positive that we decided to run a second edition. For the **2026 edition**, we **received three times as many applications** (even before the first heatwave of 2026), as well as greater interest from ZHAW students. One major change to the set-up in 2026 was that we, as co-leaders of the summer school, formed the **interdisciplinary student teams** in advance, setting each one up as a start-up team with different roles. Another addition in 2026 was that students were encouraged to take part in the **Swiss Green Economy Symposium** to discuss their ideas with practitioners. It would be great if some of the results of the summer school could be carried forward into a **ZHAW sustainable Impact Project**.

The summer school is co-organized between ZHAW School of Management and Law (Dr. Nina Boogen), ZHAW School of Life Sciences and Facility Management (Tal Hertig), and ZHAW School of Engineering (Prof. Vicente Carabias- Hütter).

Dr. Nina Boogen

Senior Lecturer

Center for Energy and the Environment

ZHAW School of Management and Law

[Contact](#)



Barriers to Innovative Curriculum

In 2025, ZHAW School of Management and Law identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing curriculum:

- ❖ Resistance from students
- ❖ Time constraints
- ❖ Change fatigue
- ❖ Administrative resistance

Barriers to Innovative Pedagogy

In 2025, ZHAW School of Management and Law identified the following barriers to innovating, updating, or taking risks in existing pedagogy:

- ❖ Change resistance
- ❖ Faculty confidence gaps
- ❖ Time constraints
- ❖ Limited interdisciplinary teaching approaches

Continue telling your story

Successful Launch CAS Managing Diversity, Inclusion and Social Sustainability

The ZHAW School of Management and Law successfully launched its **first CAS Managing Diversity, Inclusion and Social Sustainability**, with the inaugural cohort of business managers **graduating in February 2026** coordinated by **Program Head, Dr. Daniela Frau**. The program equips leaders to embed

diversity, equity and inclusion into organizational strategy, covering topics from inclusive communication to social sustainability and human rights, combining seminars, case studies, and a practice-based thesis grounded in participants' own organizations.

Testimonials from the participants show the success of the program:

"I learned a great deal about the external perspective on DEI measures, while also having the opportunity to work with fellow participants who brought their own professional DEI expertise to the group. What I found particularly valuable was the opportunity to strategically expand my DEI network through the inspiring speakers, get to know relevant organisations, and gain new insights from the DEI strategies of large companies. All these diverse perspectives have further sharpened my understanding of DEI. I am now looking forward to gradually putting what I have learned into practice and creating a lasting impact."

– **David Reichlin**, Diversity Specialist, Würth-Group

"The CAS showed me how diversity, inclusion and social sustainability can be strategically integrated. I was particularly inspired by the practical insights, the interdisciplinary dialogue and the concrete approaches to shaping a sustainable and future-oriented world of work. For my consulting projects, I am taking away sound knowledge and effective tools that I can put into practice."

– **Vassilis Donikian**, People & Culture Consultant, HUMN AG



The first cohort of the CAS Managing Diversity, Inclusion & Social Sustainability (middle) together with Dr. Daniela Frau, Program Head (right) and Alexandra Grammenou, Operations Manager (left).

Biodiversity as a Strategy for Practitioners

Bringing practitioners closer to biodiversity

The idea to create the **Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) Biodiversity Strategies** was nurtured by a core team of four people whose hearts beat for nature. We have each chosen an education and pursued careers in what we may coin **environmental development**: the way that human development interferes with and can positively affect the natural systems it depends on. In our jobs, we saw a **growing gap between the declining state of biodiversity worldwide and on our doorstep** and the waning attention to this loss, which threatens to push many species and ecosystems beyond recovery. With this loss, human development goals also move out of reach. We decided to create a course where **practitioners from various backgrounds and occupations** could build the knowledge and competences to help close this gap within their own spheres of influence. Receiving financial support from Swiss **Federal Office of Energy (SFOE)** gave us confidence that we were on the right track.

Bringing together expertise from science and practice across ZHAW and beyond, the CAS builds in its first module a core understanding of **the nature of biodiversity and its value**, why it is under pressure, and how we can reach the goals set by 198 states that signed the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework** in 2022. By adding finance and business perspectives, along with those of our participants, we uncover hurdles and seek synergies and opportunities. In the second module of the CAS, participants build essential competences to identify and use the standards, tools, and measurement methods, as well as transformation strategies, that best fit their own context.



Experiencing biodiversity on the ground during the CAS sessions.

Participants share the goal of redirecting attention, care, and resources toward biodiversity. They value the group's broad mix, the course topics and learning methods, the hands-on and “can do” approach, and the strong focus on joint learning. The outcome will be **context-specific strategic projects** implemented after the course, directly benefiting biodiversity and serving as multipliers that advance the cause. While sustainability and environmentalism may seem to have little support in today's society, the CAS shows that **biodiversity loss** has caught the attention of businesses, small and large, and that this attention will only grow with both losses and successes.

The **CAS Biodiversity Strategies** was co-developed by the **Center for Energy and the Environment** and **Center for Corporate Performance and Sustainable Financing** in the ZHAW School of Management and Law.

Dr. Viola Bettina Schwarzen

Senior Lecturer & Researcher

Head of CAS Biodiversity Strategies

Center for Energy and the Environment

[Contact](#)



Master's CEM Alumni build a Start-Up for Circular Supply Chains

Three ZHAW alumni launch a start-up for circular supply chains: Right after completing their MSc in Circular Economy Management, Till F ülscher, Louis Ecker and Dominik Arpagaus took the leap into entrepreneurship. In this interview, they share how their idea emerged during their studies at ZHAW – and why now was exactly the right time to start a business.



The three entrepreneurs in their graduation day: Till Fölscher, Louis Ecker and Dominik Arpagaus

What exactly does your company MESH offer?

Dominik: In short: We build digital twins of supply chains to help companies make their processes more circular and

Till: The idea emerged during our master's theses. I explored what complex systems theory can teach us about circular based decisions and design more sustainable supply chains.

You already gained your first client while still studying. Can you tell us more about that?

Dominik: Yes, we actually found our first client during our time at ZHAW. As part of a case study in the third semester based metal construction company known for producing the iconic Landi benches. The original assignment was to calculate the CO₂ footprint of lighting structures. When data collection was delayed, we instead developed a tool that allowed the company to carry out calculations independently at a later stage. They appreciated it so much that we received a paid follow-up project shortly afterwards – even before MESH officially existed.

How has your idea evolved since founding the company?

Till: The biggest change concerns how we communicate what we do. At the beginning, we explained everything in too

Louis: We also realised that many companies don't yet have the data they would actually need. Today, we therefore start with building a solid data foundation.

"At the time, ZHAW was the only university that offered circular economy as a central subject. I wanted to do something meaningful – and the program gave me that perspective."

– **Louis Ecker**, Team MESH

Where do you see MESH in the coming years?

Dominik: We are currently testing our service in several pilot projects. Once we have successfully completed five or more and that is exactly what drives us.

How does collaboration work within your founding team?

Till: We have clear roles. I focus on the technical and strategic side, Dominik manages operations, and Louis contributes to the marketing side.

Louis: Trust is key. During project work in our studies, we realised that we collaborate effectively – without conflicts or free riders. That was the best possible foundation for starting a company together.

You founded your company immediately after graduation. Wasn't that a big risk?

Till: On the contrary –

it was and still is the perfect timing, because the risk will probably never be lower than it is now. We don't have major obligations and can maintain the lifestyle we had as students. Of course, it takes courage –

but the timing is ideal. And it's incredibly fulfilling to see your own idea work and to collaborate with people you chose yourself.



Dean of ZHAW SML, Prof. Reto Steiner with the top MSc CEM graduates among them the three entrepreneurs of the team MESH.

Why did you choose the MSc in Circular Economy Management at ZHAW?

Dominik: Honestly, it was a coincidence. I had just completed my bachelor's degree and came across an advertisement for the MSc in Circular Economy Management at ZHAW.

Till: I wanted to shift from psychology towards a more technical direction – and ZHAW offered exactly that: sustainability combined with a practical, interdisciplinary approach.

Louis: At the time, ZHAW was the only university that offered circular economy as a central subject. I wanted to do so and the program gave me that perspective.

What stands out most from your time as students?

Louis: The practical relevance. Through excursions and company projects, we were constantly connected to the real world that was extremely valuable. One particularly inspiring experience was a visit to FIFA in Zurich, where we discussed human rights and environmental responsibility with the organisation's sustainability lead. She said that if she could reduce CO₂ emissions by just three percent at FIFA, it would have a greater impact than doing everything perfectly at a small NGO. That idea – focusing on where you can achieve the greatest measurable impact – still guides us today.

Dominik: The case studies were also crucial. Without them, we would never have gained our first client.

Louis: And something we will never forget is the time we spent together between lectures. On the Wädenswil campus and anyone who didn't show up received a small complaint message. It brought us closer together, and we still laugh about it today.

What advice would you give to current or future master's students who want to start their own business?

Dominik: Just do it. Try things out, test, adjust – you quickly learn what works and what doesn't.

Till: And speak with potential customers as early as possible. Don't wait until the idea is perfect – the most important lessons come from engaging with practice.

Summer School Sustainable Digital Finance 2026

Summer School Sustainable Digital Finance 2026



How can digital technologies help steer capital towards a more sustainable economy? From 7 to 11 September 2026, the Summer School Sustainable Digital Finance brought together Swiss and international students to explore this question. The week was organised by the **ZHAW Institute of Wealth & Asset Management** at the School of Management and Law, together with the **University of Zurich (UZH)**. It is part of the **Digitalisation Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions (DIZH)**. The programme alternated between UZH in Zurich and ZHAW in Winterthur and was aimed at bachelor's, master's and PhD students interested in sustainability, digitalisation and finance.

The programme started with **an introduction to sustainable finance** and then covered the latest developments in **digital finance**. From there it moved to **how FinTech and sustainability come together**, and how machine learning can be applied in the financial sector. Interactive lectures were combined with **practical case studies** and hands-on sessions in which participants worked on real

problems using Python and Excel. Group projects allowed students from different academic and cultural backgrounds to apply what they had learned together. Practice partners, including **Swiss Life** and **The Hashgraph Group**, brought an industry perspective into the classroom.

The teaching team included **Prof. Beat Affolter**, **Dr. Nicole Bellert**, **David Jaggi**, **Niccole Jordan** and **Prof. Jan-Alexander Posth** from **ZHAW SML**, and **Prof. Thomas Puschmann** from **UZH's Department of Finance**. Participants who completed the programme received a **certificate and 3 ECTS credits**.

The summer school reflects ZHAW SML's commitment to Responsible Management Education. It equips future finance professionals with both the technical skills and the sustainability mindset needed to shape the financial system of tomorrow.



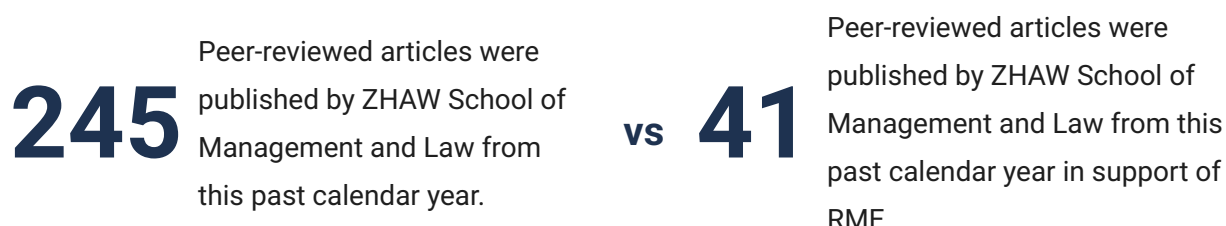
Research

We study people, organizations, institutions, and the state of the world to inspire responsible management and education practice.

How We Define Research

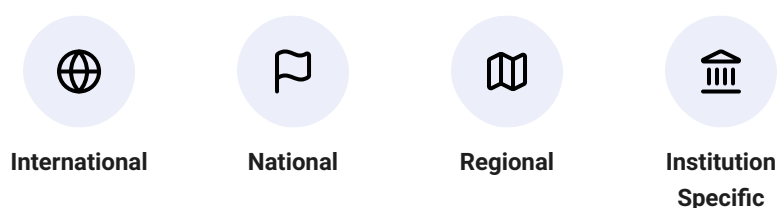
We understand research as the rigorous and relevant pursuit of knowledge in service of both science and society. Rigorous in methodological soundness and transparency, relevant in addressing real-world challenges, our research remains open to interdisciplinary ideas through applied research projects and thrives on national and international cooperation with partner institutions.

Research vs Research for RME/Sustainable Development



Research Funding

In 2025, ZHAW School of Management and Law was awarded funding for research that is:



Socializing Research

In 2025, ZHAW School of Management and Law contributed research findings to:

- ❖ National media
- ❖ Local media
- ❖ Industry and business networks
- ❖ Open-access platforms
- ❖ Public events and lectures
- ❖ Social media and digital outreach
- ❖ Research collaborations

Research Projects

In 2025, ZHAW School of Management and Law reported 4 research projects that implemented responsible or sustainable activities.

AI- Enabled Sustainable Finance

Period Covering: May, 2025 - May, 2026

Department: Banking and Finance

Project Lead: Prof. Dr. Julia Meyer, Michaela Tanner, Prof. Dr. Alexandre de Spindler

Project Partners: Finalix AG

Funding Partner: Innosuisse Innovationsscheck

Budget: 15'000 CHF

Description

Financial advice traditionally focuses on maximizing returns while balancing client-specific preferences in terms of risk and liquidity. However, the growing importance of **sustainability in investment decisions** has brought a new dimension to the advisory process. Advisors now face the challenge of combining their financial expertise with nuanced knowledge of sustainability.

Unlike financial markets, where advisors have deep-rooted expertise, **sustainability represents a new and distinct field with minimal overlap with traditional finance**, where advisors must first build their own expertise before effectively guiding their clients. As a consequence, many financial advisors currently **aim to avoid the sustainability topic in conversations with their clients**. To overcome these obstacles, this project is trying to develop a disruptive solution that partially automates advisory support and embeds it directly into the customer interaction process.

We introduce a product that listens to and analyzes **live conversations** between financial advisors and clients. It dynamically identifies **relevant sustainability-related knowledge**, formulates this information in natural language, ensures compliance with affected regulation and displays it in real time, powered by a conversational agent using state-of-the-art large language models (LLMs) and retrieval augmented generation (RAG) techniques.



Sustainability and financial preferences for investors

Period Covering: August, 2024 - December, 2025

Department: Banking & Finance

Project Lead: Professor Dr. Julia Meyer

Funding Partner: Ministry of Environment (BAFU)

Budget: 85,000 CHF

Description

This project will develop an open-source tool that combines the financial and non-financial preferences of investors. The tool should ensure that client decisions are not distorted by false incentives, such as an existing product range. It should therefore aim to ensure that the independence of advice is maintained as far as possible from a scientific point of view. The tool should be able to be integrated as widely as possible by commercial providers of financial products and non-commercial providers of comparative data, and should meet the regulatory requirements of Switzerland (including self-regulation of the financial sector) and the EU.

A key problem with previous practical tools is that they measure sustainability preferences in isolation from financial characteristics. The new tool addresses this issue by measuring sustainability preferences in conjunction with traditional investment characteristics, thereby revealing the compromises that investors are actually willing to make.

Through structured and quantitative data collection, the tool improves the quality of advice, increases the fit between customer expectations and investment products, and at the same time reduces the risks of misadvice and greenwashing. The prototype thus makes a significant contribution to investor protection and the credibility of sustainable financial markets.

Link to the Tool in [French](#) and in [German](#) language.

Further results and methodological background information can be found in the white paper attached.



Digital – Social – Sustainable? Sustainable Consumer Behavior on Social Media (DiSoNa)

Period Covering: July, 2025 - July, 2027

Department: Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Project Lead: Prof. Dr. Jan Bieser (BFH)

Deputy Project Lead: Dr. Katrin Maria Pakizer

Co-Project Lead: Dr. Yann Blumer (ZHAW)

Project Partners: Bern University of Applied Sciences

Funding Partner: Stiftung Mercator Switzerland

Budget: 300,000 CHF

Situation

In Switzerland, around **7 million people are already active on social media platforms** such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Using these platforms has become one of the most popular leisure activities, especially among young people. Studies show that this **influences consumer behavior** and can stimulate both digital and physical consumption by encouraging impulsive, excessive, or status-driven purchasing decisions. This often leads to higher consumption and increases resource use, with negative ecological consequences.

Course of action

This project investigates consumption-increasing incentive structures in social media ecosystems, assesses their potential impact based on empirical evidence, and initiates a constructive discourse on necessary and implementable changes.

The project is implemented by the **Bern University of Applied Sciences** and the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), and is funded by the **Mercator Foundation** Switzerland.



Empowering Women Managers: A comparative study of Switzerland and South Africa

Period Covering: September, 2026 - December, 2028

Department: International Business

Project Lead: Prof. Dr. Zeynep Erden Özkol, ZHAW School of Management and Law

Co-Project Lead: Dr. Ntombikayise Nkosi, University of South Africa

Project Team: Dr. Daniela Frau, ZHAW School of Management and Law

Project Partners: University of South Africa

Funding Partner: Bilateral Programms Swiss National Foundation (SNF)

Budget: 300'000 CHF

Description

Based on a phenomenological paradigm, the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the **perspectives of these leaders** and to shed light on their **challenges and opportunities in promoting gender equality and quality education** in line with **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 5, and 17**.

SDG 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable education, **SDG 5** to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and **SDG 17** to foster global partnerships for sustainable development.

A qualitative research approach is adopted that integrates **Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)** and is grounded in feminist theories such as standpoint theory and intersectionality. These frameworks critically examine the power dynamics and social inequalities affecting marginalized groups, particularly **women in leadership positions**.

The study employs a **purposive sampling strategy** to select 80 female and 20 male school leaders — including principals, deputy principals, and heads of department — from two districts in **eThekweni** and the **Canton of Zurich**. Data is collected through **focus group discussions**, which provide participants with a platform to share their insights and experiences.

Thematic analysis identifies and interprets patterns in the data, enabling a nuanced understanding of the factors shaping these women's leadership experiences, as well as the strategies that can empower them to achieve SDGs 4 and 5. Ethical guidelines are strictly adhered to. The study follows the requirements of the **University of South Africa**, the **KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education**, and the **Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW)** to ensure the protection, confidentiality, and autonomy of all participants.



Research Awards

In 2025, ZHAW School of Management and Law was awarded 2 research awards for responsibility- and/or sustainability-related research.

Saskia Stucki wins Latsis Prize 2025

Granter: Swiss National Science Foundation

Grantee: Saskia Stucki

Award Description:

The Latsis Swiss Science Prize has been awarded every year since 1984 by the SNSF on behalf of the Fondation Latsis Internationale, a non-profit public benefit foundation established in 1975 and headquartered in Geneva. It is awarded to researchers with an academic age of maximum 10 years who work in Switzerland. The prize, which is worth CHF 100,000, is one of the most prestigious Swiss awards in scientific research.

The award ceremony (together with that for the Marcel Benoist Prize) took place on Thursday, 6 November 2025 at the Bundeshaus in Bern.

Saskia Stucki grew up in central Switzerland. Driven by a calling for justice, Stucki began law studies at the University of Basel. But it was only while working on her master's that she came to realise how her twin passions for animals and the law could be merged. Stucki obtained her PhD at the University of Basel in 2015, with a thesis on fundamental rights for animals. From 2012 to 2016, she coordinated the doctoral programme "Law and Animals".

Stucki has held fellowships at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law in Heidelberg and, supported by the SNSF, at Harvard Law School. Since October 2024, she has been a senior lecturer and researcher in public law at ZHAW and a researcher at the University of Zurich. Since July 2025, she is director of the Center for Animal Rights and the Environment (CARE) at ZHAW. Her research has fundamentally contributed to SDG 15- Life on Land focusing on theorization of animal rights as a new legal phenomenon with many countries around the world recognizing animals as rightsholders.

ZHAW SML Project Impact Award 2026

Granter: ZHAW School of Management and Law

Grantee: Dr. Christina Marchand, Dr. Devon Wemyss, Mélanie Binggeli, Prof. Dr. Adrian W. Müller, Prof. Dr. Claudia Cometta

Award Description:

The ZHAW SML Project Impact Award is awarded once a year to an exceptional research team that can demonstrate social, environmental and financial impact through their projects.

The team of the Center for Innovation Systems in the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship received the Project Impact Award 2026 for their continuous work on the "Innovation Monitor." Since 2015, the Swiss Environment & Energy Innovation Monitor has provided information on new

companies and innovative projects in the fields of environment and energy in alignment with SDG 7, SDG 9 and SDG 17. It was developed to increase the visibility of Swiss environmental and energy startups and to improve collaboration between startups, established companies, government agencies, and the research community. Additionally, it aims to gain insights into the development of startups and innovation ecosystems. The startups and basic information about them are publicly available on the official website.

Publications Related to RME and/or Sustainability

Discursive responsible leadership and moral distress: A cross-national moderated serial mediation analysis

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Javed Muzhar, Rabat Business School, International University of Rabatt, Morocco | Yasin Raheel, Rabat Business School, International University of Rabatt, Morocco | Voegtlin Christian, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Rescalvo- Martin Elisa, Business Management Faculty, University of Granada, Granada, Spain | Kim Taegoo Terry, Department of Global Business, School of Global Eminence, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Republic of Korea | Karatepe Osman M., Faculty of Tourism, Eastern Mediterranean University, Turkey

Date of publication: June, 2026

Department: Management | Responsible Leadership | Business Ethics

Our study developed and tested a *novel* moderated serial mediation model of discursive responsible leadership (RL). Cross-national data were used to assess the hypotheses. In Study 1 (Thailand), the results reflected that RL intensified leader's moral distress (MD). Role overload and decision paralysis acted as serial mediators between RL and MD. Role clarity moderated the indirect effect of RL on MD via role overload and decision paralysis. In Study 2 (Malaysia), all hypotheses, excluding the one about role overload as a mediator between RL and MD, were supported. Our research goes beyond the dominant positive view of RL by theorizing RL as a source of leader stress and investigating decision paralysis as an important linking mechanism, extending job demands-resources theory to stakeholder-oriented leadership settings. The results highlight the significance of clear role structures and effective decision-support systems in supporting leaders to navigate stakeholder multiplicity and decision complexity and sustain RL.



Responsible Leadership Types: Understanding the Variety and Implications of Different Forms of Leading Responsibly

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Voegtlin Christian, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Crane Andrew, School of Management, University of Bath, United Kingdom

Date of publication: April, 2026

Department: Responsible Leadership | Business Ethics

Responsible leadership can be manifested in a variety of ways but we lack understanding of what drives this variation and what the implications are of different approaches. In this conceptual article, we develop a novel typology of responsible leadership approaches based on leaders' different perceived obligations as experts, facilitators, and citizens, giving rise to seven distinct responsible leadership types. We build our arguments on role theory and ground responsible leadership in a psychological perspective. We show what happens when leaders focus on some of these obligations and neglect others, outlining tensions and mutually reinforcing effects of enacting responsibility in these different ways. Our analysis provides new insight on the drivers and challenges of different responsible leadership types and offers scholars and practitioners a new lens through which to study and approach responsible leadership.



Responsible leadership and sustainability : the interplay of modes and models of corporate governance

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Salaiz Ashley | Chiu (Shih-Chi) Sana | Voegtlin Christian, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Walls Judith, University of St Gallen, Switzerland

Date of publication: August, 2025

Department: International Business | Management | Responsible Leadership

Management scholars have explored the role that organizations and their leaders play in solving the grand challenges of sustainability, such as the United Nation's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While corporate governance has traditionally taken an agency theory perspective to protect the interest of shareholders, ever-increasing social and environmental crises call for firms to integrate sustainability into a key component of firm strategy. This chapter argues that responsible leadership for organizational sustainability leans on different modes and models of corporate governance, beyond agency theory. This chapter draws on a framework comprised of four processes (i.e.,

prioritizing, contextualizing, collaborating, and innovating) to inform governance choices for responsible leadership including established and novel forms, such as resource dependence, stewardship, behavioral, stakeholder, international, polycentric, and values-based governance models.



Pondering the Promises & Problems of Participatory Policy-Making: Lessons Learned from Experiences in Four European Countries

| [DOI](#)

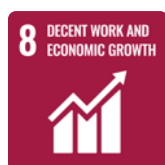
Authors: Roth Florian, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Topaloglou Lefteris, University of Western Macedonia, Greece | Gabova Snezhina, Sofia Development Association, Bulgaria | Bakouros Yannis, University of Western Macedonia, Greece | Happle Gabriel, Environment and Sustainability Department, Municipality of Thalwil, Switzerland | Kouskoura Amalia, University of Western Macedonia, Greece | Xirinachs Puiggròs Anna, Business support Promoció Econòmica de Sabadell, Barcelona

Date of publication: July, 2025

Department: International Business | Innovation and Entrepreneurship

To effectively address grand challenges, such as decarbonization, digitalization and demographic change, engagement is required from diverse actors across policy-making, private business, academia and civil society. Contemporary transformation literature emphasizes Participatory Policy-making (PPM) instruments as critical tools in this process. PPM purportedly enhances both the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies while simultaneously strengthening their legitimacy – a function particularly valuable for socially contested policy issues. However, critical perspectives highlight various theoretical and practical concerns associated with PPM implementation.

This article aims to contribute to deliberative theory and practice by presenting a risk-based perspective on PPM that examines intended effects in relation to unintended consequences and contextual factors. Drawing on the lessons learned during PPM projects in Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, and Switzerland, we explore the opportunities and challenges of introducing PPM instruments at the local level within transformative societal processes. Specifically, we investigate the implementation of a set of participatory instruments – such as stakeholder workshops, Delphi surveys, focus groups and citizen panels – over a three-year period from 2021 to 2023. We identify four key contextual conditions influencing the prospects for successful PPM: Local political situation, trust and social capital, institutional commitment, and deliberative capacities. Based on these findings, we develop a set of guiding questions, aimed to support practitioners to develop deliberative strategies that anticipate and mitigate unintended negative consequences, such as the deceleration of essential policy changes or the erosion of political legitimization.



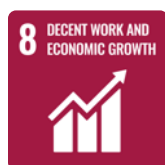
Together We Stand, Divided We Fall | [DOI](#)

Authors: Busch Thorsten, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Chee Florence, Loyola University, Chicago, United States | Sihvonon Tanja, University of Vaasa, Finland

Date of publication: November, 2025

Department: International Business

In this chapter, we briefly explain why sustainability has to always be thought of holistically, i.e., across its three dimensions (economic, social, and environmental). We then discuss how these three dimensions matter to game developers. Lastly, we provide some high-level recommendations as to how game developers can improve their sustainability practices.



Keeping Up With the Times? Rethinking Social Evaluations Research Under Contemporary Technological and Sociopolitical Forces

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Clemente Marco, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Etter Michael, King's College London, UK | Snihur Yuliya, IESE Business School, University of Navarra, Spain | Ertug Gokhan, Singapore Management University, Singapore | Scott Graffin, University of Georgia, United States | Zavyalova Anastasiya, Rice University, Texas, United States

Date of publication: June, 2026

Department: International Business | Management

The context within which social evaluations form has been fundamentally altered by contemporary forces, such as digital technologies, polarization, activism, politicization of business, and geopolitical tensions. While research on social evaluations has generated rich insights into the formation and development of constructs, such as legitimacy, status, reputation, stigma, trust, and celebrity, much of this work has been developed under the assumptions of relative stability, coherent audiences, and well-defined intermediary roles. These assumptions are increasingly challenged in this changing context, requiring us to rethink the formation and management of social evaluations. The articles in this special issue focus on these changes. Building on these contributions, this introductory article

develops a research agenda across seven interconnected areas: the stability and fragility of social evaluations, audience fragmentation and convergence, the reshaping of the intermediary landscape, construct interrelationships, range and extension of constructs, the measurement of social evaluations, and their underlying foundations. We discuss how these transformations affect not only organizations and evaluative processes, but also the societal impact of social evaluations. Overall, this editorial provides a framework to guide future research in a field undergoing profound transition.



Towards Strong Sustainability: Exploring Reconfigurations of Sufficiency-Oriented and Regenerative Business Models

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Maike Gossen, Technische Universität Berlin, Germany | Katrin Pakizer, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Maren Kropfeld, Tomorrow University of Applied Sciences, Germany | Nancy Bocken, Maastricht University, Netherlands

Date of publication: May, 2026

Department: Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Despite increasing adoption of sustainable business models, environmental decline and social disparities continue to accelerate. Strong sustainable business models offer an alternative by prioritizing ecological limits and systemic change. Drawing on an integrative literature review and business model modularization, this study examines how sufficiency-oriented business models and regenerative business models can be reconfigured to advance sustainability. Both share common elements such as longevity, stakeholder collaboration and reinvestment of profits for sustainable value creation, which indicates that they are compatible with different value logics. The study proposes a modular framework enabling businesses to reconfigure components from both models, while maintaining coherence of the dominant value logic by applying modularity principles. From a systemic perspective, three feedback dynamics—growth-dependent logics, legitimacy erosion and socio-ecological misalignment—are identified as critical conditions shaping viable configurations. The study also explores what makes strong sustainable business models difficult to realize in practice.



How psychological and contextual barriers to environmentally sustainable consumption vary across domains: A comparative study of food, electronics, and clothing in Switzerland | [DOI](#)

Authors: Swen J. Kühne, ZHAW School of Applied Psychology, Switzerland | Yann Blumer, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Sandor Czellar, University of Lausanne, Switzerland | Simona Haasova, University of Lausanne, Switzerland | Pascal Streule, ZHAW School of Applied Psychology, Switzerland | Leila Rahmani, University of Lausanne, Switzerland | Renate Schubert, ETH Zurich, Switzerland | Gregor Waller, ZHAW School of Applied Psychology, Switzerland

Date of publication: March, 2026

Department: Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Background: Despite growing environmental awareness, significant gaps persist between environmentally sustainable consumption intentions and behaviors. Most research examines barriers to environmentally sustainable consumption either in general or within a single consumption domain.

Objective: This study compares perceived contextual (such as price, availability, trust) and psychological barriers (change unnecessary, conflicting goals and aspirations, interpersonal relations, lack of knowledge, and tokenism) to environmentally sustainable consumption across three major domains—food, electronics, and clothing—to understand how these determine perceived behavioral barriers and their relationship to self-reported behaviors in the acquisition phase.

Methods: Data were collected as part of a national survey on environmentally sustainable consumption in food, portable consumer electronics, and clothing. We analyzed responses from 1136 Swiss residents. Participants reported pro-environmental behaviors and contextual barriers across all three domains and were then randomly assigned to complete additional psychological barrier questions for one domain. Analyses addressed three research questions by comparing behavioral engagement and barrier patterns across domains and examining the relationship between psychological barriers and self-reported behavior within each domain.

Results: Environmentally sustainable behaviors were most prevalent in the food domain, despite participants reporting the strongest perceived barriers, particularly with respect to high prices (53% vs. 34% in electronics and 40% in clothes). Psychological barriers varied significantly across domains, with food showing higher interpersonal relations barriers but lower knowledge barriers compared to electronics and clothing. Electronics consistently showed the lowest engagement across comparable behaviors, while environmentally sustainable clothing faced unique availability constraints (17% vs. 10% in electronics).

Discussion and conclusions: Environmentally sustainable consumption needs to be understood not only as an abstract concept but also as a domain-specific phenomenon. Food consumption benefits from high awareness but faces contextual price barriers and challenges in social coordination. Electronics purchases suffer from fundamental ambiguity regarding sustainability criteria and infrequent purchase cycles, which limit learning opportunities. Clothing purchases navigate concerns about identity expression alongside availability constraints. These findings demonstrate that effective interventions must align with each domain's unique decision context, addressing price structures in the food area, information systems in the electronics field, and availability infrastructure in the clothing sector—rather than applying one-size-fits-all approaches.



Towards a common intervention framework: A taxonomy of theory and techniques for digital energy behaviour change

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Devon Wemyss, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland

Date of publication: March, 2026

Department: Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Since 2010, a proliferation of digital tools, such as smartphone apps, have been tested to encourage energy-related behaviour change in European research projects. However, there has been little analysis on the intervention design and the alignment with behaviour change theory. The paper proposes a framework for a standardized taxonomy for better cross-comparison and knowledge transfer between projects, and as a tool for design and replication of interventions. The taxonomy is applied to 29 digital tools from EU-funded research projects and identifies the behaviour change *techniques* employed and the proposed theory-based *mechanisms of action* driving behaviour change. The analysis finds a wide diversity in the mechanisms of action, with clustering around motivation, intention, knowledge, feedback processes, social influences, beliefs about capabilities, and behavioural regulation. The techniques for behaviour change used in the analysed cases are found to both align to underlying theories of behaviour change, but also deviate from theory, potentially due to context, resources, or personal experience. While it appears that EU funders have an appetite for digital-based interventions for energy behaviour change, there is little consensus on effective design. Looking forward, a more systematic use of techniques in order to evaluate and improve the impact, cost-effectiveness, and longevity of these approaches seems pertinent to capture the potential value of digital tools for behaviour change.



Comparing and combining theory of planned behavior and dragons of inaction to explain pro-environmental consumption behavior

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Sara Gomm, ETH Zurich, Switzerland | Yann Blumer, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Sandor Czellar, University of Lausanne, Switzerland | Simona Haasova, University of Lausanne, Switzerland | Swen J. Kühne, ZHAW School of Applied Psychology, Switzerland | Renate Schubert, ETH Zurich, Switzerland | Thomas Bernauer, ETH Zurich, Switzerland

Date of publication: April, 2026

Department: Innovation & Entrepreneurship

We compare the well-established Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with the more recent Dragons of Inaction Psychological Barriers (DIPB) framework in explaining individuals' propensity to make sustainable consumption choices and explore how the two could be integrated. We use a choice experimental approach to measure pro-environmental consumption propensity across three consumption domains (electronics, clothes, food) and then examine how the two explanations compare to and complement each other. The data was collected through an original survey with a large, nationally representative sample of the Swiss adult population ($N \approx 5'000$). The main findings are that revealed environmental impacts play an important role in stated consumption choices and that the DIPB framework performs at least as well as the TPB in explaining individuals' pro-environmental consumption propensity. The analytic framework and study design, which integrate the TPB and DIPB scale and use a combined experimental and observational approach, provide a template for further research on a wide range of consumer products in different country contexts and consumption domains.



Enabling a Circular Water Transition: Identifying Governance Pathways for Wastewater Reuse

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Kirsty Holstead, Wageningen University, the Netherlands | Katrin Pakizer, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Nicolas W. Jager, Technische Universität Berlin, Germany | Eva Lieberherr, ETH Zurich, Switzerland | Manuel Fischer, University of Bern, Switzerland

Date of publication: May, 2026

Department: Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Over 80% of the world's wastewater is discharged untreated, making reuse a widely underutilised strategy for addressing water scarcity. Due to the complexity of implementing water reuse systems, supportive governance conditions are required to steer this process and overcome barriers. Insights from water governance and sustainability transitions literature suggest that configurations of governance-related conditions, such as the extent of regulatory certainty, economic incentives, social acceptance, innovation capacity and contextual conditions of water scarcity, influence water reuse. Previous research has explored the barriers to water reuse, focusing on isolated case studies leaving the question of how these conditions interact to enable implementation largely unresolved. This study applies Fuzzy Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis across 15 international cases to identify configurations of conditions that enable water reuse, moving beyond individual drivers to map archetypal pathways. We found three distinct pathways to successful implementation. First, low regulatory uncertainty alone was sufficient to enable reuse, underscoring the foundational role of regulatory frameworks. Second, high social acceptance—rooted in public trust, engagement, and participatory design—can compensate for the absence of financial incentives, particularly in European contexts. However, this may be less applicable in resource-constrained settings. The third and most globally distributed pathway confirms that water scarcity can drive reuse, but only when accompanied by social and technical readiness. The third and most globally distributed pathway confirms that water scarcity can drive reuse, but only when accompanied by social and technical readiness involving technical knowledge, skills training, interdisciplinary collaboration and opportunities for experimentation. Notably, neither water scarcity nor financial incentives emerged as necessary conditions for successful implementation across all pathways. These findings challenge commonly held assumptions about what drives water reuse and offer a more nuanced understanding of the governance configurations that can support water reuse.



From Nuclear to PV and Hydro Storage: Exploring the Transition to Renewable Energy Systems

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Nina Walker, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Juan Esteban Martinez-Jaramillo, University of Stuttgart, Germany | Busra Gencer, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Date of publication: November, 2025

Department: Innovation & Entrepreneurship

The transition from nuclear power to photovoltaic (PV) energy has significant implications for electricity markets and energy storage systems. This study employs a system dynamics (SDs) model to analyze the effects of replacing nuclear energy with PV on market equilibrium and the operation of pumped hydropower storage (PHS). We model two distinct regions, one with stable demand and generation and another with high seasonality, to examine the interplay between generation capacity, market pricing, and storage efficiency. Our findings indicate that while PV reduces reliance on nuclear energy, it leads to increased electricity prices due to higher storage costs and the intermittent nature of solar generation. The introduction of PV also alters intraday and seasonal price dynamics, influencing both market behavior and consumer costs. These results highlight the importance of considering regional conditions and storage capacity when designing energy transition policies. Our study provides insights for policymakers and energy planners on optimizing renewable energy integration while ensuring economic and market stability.



Thrive in sunshine, brace for thunder: Least-cost robust power system investments under political shocks

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Ali Darudi, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland | Jonas Savelsberg, ETH Zurich, Switzerland | Ingmar Schlecht, ZHAW School of Management and Law, Switzerland

Date of publication: March, 2026

Department: Public Sector

Energy system planning literature often focuses on either normal operating conditions or on shock scenarios. Systems designed only for normal years struggle during crises like fuel shortages or trade restrictions, leading to lost load or excessively high prices, while systems optimized entirely for shocks can result in overinvestment in generation technologies with high capital costs. In this paper, we address this limitation by incorporating both normal years and shocks in one single optimization model, using a partial equilibrium electricity market model. Using Switzerland as a case study, we demonstrate how varying the severity and frequency of shocks affects the optimal technology mix. In the case of Switzerland, robust planning of the generation mix becomes crucial only at trade capacity reductions of more than 70%. When gas import is unavailable during the shock period, liquid fuel becomes optimal in severe trade capacity reduction scenarios happening between once in 100 years to once in 10 years. As the frequency of these shocks increases, higher CAPEX technologies, such as renewables, become more favourable, with nuclear emerging as a viable option only if severe trade shocks happen every other year. Our findings underscore the importance of balancing cost-efficiency with system resilience to ensure robust energy system planning.



Toward a Sustainability Standard for Cultural Organizations: Borrowing From Tourism

| [DOI](#)

Authors: Małgorzata Ćwikła, Senior Researcher, Center for Arts Management, ZHAW School of Management and Law | Letitia Labarone, Center for Arts Management, ZHAW School of Management and Law

Date of publication: May, 2026

Presented at: National or international academy of management | National or international discipline-specific conference

Department: Public Sector

Cultural organizations are increasingly engaging with sustainability, yet they lack a sector-specific standard to guide and institutionalize efforts as long-term strategies. This study reviews research papers on sustainability standards in the tourism sector, a field with greater experience with such tools, and horizontally borrows insights into the cultural sector. Using a mixed-methods approach, we begin with a semi-systematic literature review of 42 selected papers to identify governance practices for the design and implementation of standards. This is followed by a diffractive analysis that rereads insights through the contextual realities of cultural organizations. The study proposes a conceptual framework to inform the development of a tailored sustainability standard for cultural organizations and, more broadly, for the sector. The framework addresses critical dimensions such as responding to the need for benchmarking, establishing sustainability-related tasks as routines, and recognizing the global momentum driving sustainability transitions with cultural organizations as entities of public trust.



Research Voices

The following statement demonstrates a way in which researchers at ZHAW School of Management and Law bring sustainability and responsible management into their research.

Interview with Professor Hannah Trittin-Ulbrich Leuphana University Lüneburg

Democracy as a fundamental element of societal prosperity

Professor Hannah Trittin-Ulbrich, Leuphana University in Lüneburg, shares her view on why corporate pro-democratic activism deserves serious research, and what she hopes business leaders will take from the joint SNSF research project led by ZHAW Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership (ZCSL)

It began with a blank page. In 2023, Professor Hannah Trittin-Ulbrich joined the grant proposal writing that would become a **Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)** funded project on **business and democracy**, and with it, her collaboration with Professor Christian Voegtlin, Dr. Florian Roth, and Dr. Thorsten Busch from ZCSL started. Today she sits on the project's advisory board together with them, Professor Thomas Beschorner (University of St Gallen, Switzerland), and Professor Andrew Crane (University of Bath, UK).

Her reason for joining is disarmingly direct. *"Democracies are under pressure, in that climate, the question of what companies do, whether they stay silent, retreat, or step forward, stops being an academic curiosity and becomes urgent. We need to better understand when and how corporations engage in pro-democratic activism."*

That urgency rests on a simple chain of reasoning. Corporations shape the prosperity of the societies they operate in. Democracy, in turn, is a fundamental element of that prosperity. Which means the question of how and when business defends democratic processes is not a niche topic at all, it goes to the heart of understanding the role of business in society.

What are the expected outcome of this project?

The collaborative project's ambition is to replace scattered examples with systematic knowledge. Professor Trittin-Ulbrich expects three things from it: a clearer account of *why* and *how* corporations act to support and safeguard democratic processes; in-depth analysis of individual cases alongside a broader map of the different types of pro-democratic corporate political activism; and novel insights from the German-speaking context, which remains underrepresented in the existing literature.

What is the contribution of the different partner universities involved?

Conducting this kind of research well takes more than one research tradition. The strength of an international research partnership across four academic institutions, she notes, lies in the combination of different skill sets and different theoretical viewpoints because a topic this tangled is unlikely to yield to a single lens.

What would be the award that would count?

Asked what success would look like, Prof. Trittin-Ulbrich does not reach first for publications. *"The biggest reward would be that the results of our project are noticed by business leaders and that they find the results informative and guiding for their actions."* Alongside that, she hopes the project will extend the scholarly debate on corporate political activism in meaningful ways.

It is, in other words, exactly the kind of research PRME asks a business school to support: **rigorous enough to advance a field**, and **grounded enough to change what leaders actually do**.



Prof. Hannah Trittin-Ulbrich beyond a valuable ZCSL partner also hosted the 13th RMER Conference in Leuphana University of Lüneburg in Germany.

Professor Hannah Trittin-Ulbrich

Institute of Management & Organization

Leuphana University of Lüneburg

Germany

[Contact](#)

Research Barriers

In 2025, ZHAW School of Management and Law identified the following barriers to conducting research related to sustainability and/or responsibility:

- ❖ Funding challenges
- ❖ Administrative barriers
- ❖ Time constraints

Continue telling your story

Culture Goes Sustainable: Progress and milestones

Cultural Institutions for Sustainability

The research-for-action project **Culture Goes Sustainable** (2024–2028), funded by the BRIDGE programme of the **Swiss National Science Foundation** (SNSF) and **Innosuisse**, has reached two crucial milestones in its first two years:

- Firstly, it established the global **Culture for the Planet Alliance** ([Alliance – Culture for the Planet](#)), which connects museums, opera houses, theatres, and sectoral networks from all continents. The Alliance aims to facilitate collaboration and enable the co-creation and sharing of knowledge.
- Secondly, the project team at the **Center for Arts Management** in ZHAW SML began cooperating with **ISO** (International Organization for Standardization) and set up the working group “**Cultural Organizations**”, which brings together standardization, sustainability, and cultural experts to co-develop **ISO 26540** ([ISO/AWI 26540 - Event sustainability management systems: Guidelines for application of ISO 20121:2024 in cultural organizations](#)). The ISO project, which originates from research at the ZHAW SML, aims to create the **first global sustainability standard** for **cultural organizations** that covers all dimensions of sustainability.



The members of the Culture for the Planet Alliance took a commitment towards sustainability by assembling the Declaration of Lausanne in 2025- a compass for all participating cultural and art institutions.

How did it all start? At the outset of the project, the team widely recognized the growing importance of sustainability in the arts and cultural sector and the fragmentation of existing knowledge.

"As a starting point for our analysis, we conducted a literature review that revealed how the tourism sector uses sustainability standards to embed sustainable practices into everyday operations. We translated these insights to the cultural sector and developed a conceptual framework that guided the design of a tailored sustainability standard."

– **Prof. Leticia Labaronne**, Head of the Center for Arts Management, ZHAW, and Co-Lead of Culture Goes Sustainable

"We presented the resulting working paper at EURAM 2025 and EGOS 2025, and it has since been published in the Journal Sustainable Development: [Toward a Sustainability Standard for Cultural Organizations: Borrowing From Tourism - Sustainable Development](#). We also engaged further with ISO to explore how a globally recognized standard could build trust, foster change, and give visibility to the arts and cultural sector.

We presented our ideas at a meeting of ISO/TC 354/SC 1 in Paris ([ISO/TC 354 - Events](#)), and in a subsequent global vote, our ISO project was approved. The ISO working group is an amazing opportunity to reach consensus on what is both feasible and ambitious enough to make a lasting impact. The international context of this work makes the sustainability transition a dialogue between cultures and organizational practices."

– **Dr. Małgorzata Ćwikła**, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Arts Management & Culture for the Planet, and Convenor of the ISO working group "Cultural Organizations"



The project team presented in the first plenary meeting of ISO/TC 354/SC that took place in Paris, France.

The new ISO standard contributes to **SDGs 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17.**

What comes next? In the coming months, the project team will continue developing the standard and engage with arts and cultural organizations at the global **Culture for the Planet Summit 2026** in Hong Kong, organized with **M+ Museum** and the **CUHK Jockey Club Museum of Climate Change**, to listen to what is truly needed and to collect more data for our next publications. The **next Global Summit of Culture for the Planet** is planned for **October 2027** on the **ZHAW campus** in Winterthur.



Dr. Małgorzata Ćwikła presenting the paper at the EURAM Conference 2025.

More information and updates about the research project [Culture Goes Sustainable](#) and the ZHAW SML project team can be found [here](#).

SSF Whitepaper: AI in Sustainable Finance

How Artificial Intelligence contributes to Effective Sustainable Finance

For decades now, artificial intelligence (AI) has been part of our daily lives without attracting much public attention. The recent rise of "**Generative AI**" capabilities has, however, sparked a sudden and considerable interest for AI from the general public.

This paper explores the potential applications of **AI to support sustainable finance**, along a "data-to-decision" workflow with five stages: collecting data, ensuring its quality, extracting insights, anticipating future outcomes, and drafting content to communicate results. Within each step, this paper highlights real-life use cases as illustrative examples.

Download the [full paper here](#)



Partner

We engage people from business, government, civil society, and academia to advance responsible and accountable management education and practice.

How We Define Partner

We understand partnership as co-creation, moving forward together rather than working alone. Through our RME research centers, we collaborate with actors from government, academia, civil society, and business, building lasting relationships that generate shared knowledge, jointly address societal challenges, and amplify our collective impact for responsible management and sustainable development.

Institutional Partnerships

- ❖ AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business)
- ❖ AMBA (Association of MBAs)
- ❖ EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development)
- ❖ Financial Times
- ❖ GRLI (Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative)
- ❖ Local institutions and associations
- ❖ Positive Impact Rating (PIR)
- ❖ Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)
- ❖ Responsible Research in Business & Management (RRBM)
- ❖ University Councils
- ❖ Zurich Knowledge Center for Sustainable Development (ZKSD)
- ❖ PRME Champions
- ❖ European Engineering Learning Innovation Science Alliance (EELISA)
- ❖ PRME DACH Chapter

Student Organization Partnerships

- ❖ PRME Students

Partnerships

The following provides more details on 3 key partnerships at ZHAW School of Management and Law.

GBSN for Business and Human Rights Impact Community

The GBSN Business for Human Rights Impact Community follows three main objectives:

1. Catalyze business school engagement to incorporate human rights into research and education

2. Fosters knowledge exchange to share ideas, strategies, and resources for the integration of human rights into business education
3. Enables collective action with business education, other academic disciplines and beyond academia, to advance and protect human rights globally

EELISA European University

What has happened so far: achievements and milestones

EELISA operates along several key lines of action. These include a wide range of mobility formats, from short exchange programmes and longer stays to hybrid formats for students, researchers and staff. In addition, there are joint research projects, collaborations with external partners and industry, and the continuous development of a shared “Educational Roadmap” that explores new ways of teaching and learning.

Since last year, the new EELISA Digital Campus has formed an important foundation for the practical implementation of EELISA. It serves as a central platform to connect students, researchers and staff across Europe within EELISA Communities and to provide streamlined access to current joint offerings.

Building on this, a dense network of activities has emerged in recent years: from Summer Schools – some of them carried out in collaboration with ZHAW entrepreneurship – to concrete research collaborations within joint projects with partner universities (such as the MyoPlus project).

At the same time, partner institutions are developing new educational formats and degree programmes. ZHAW is involved, among other things, in the development of interdisciplinary joint Master’s programmes, double degrees, and a shared PhD programme in the field of quantum technology and nanoscience.

EELISA also serves as a kind of “microcosm” in which innovative teaching and learning formats are initially piloted and, if successful, integrated into the universities’ curricula in the long term. One example is the Generative AI Experience Lab, which was funded and implemented as part of the EELISA Joint Call 5.

“One key objective remains the creation of a viable joint degree framework that enables EELISA students to follow a shared European educational pathway – from their first course to graduation,” says **Manuel Dömer**, Academic Coordinator of EELISA at ZHAW.

In the area of innovation and entrepreneurship, collaboration is gaining increasing momentum. The incubators of the partner universities are closely connected and create joint initiatives such as the annual EELISA Skill Up Week. With initiatives like the planned Innovate4Europe network, this collaboration is being further deepened and structurally strengthened.

At student level, EELISA has also gained significant traction over the past year. In close cooperation with the student organisation ALIAS, new activities have been launched and existing formats further strengthened. ZHAW students are becoming increasingly active within the alliance – whether through representation in the EELISA Student Council or participation in international formats such as the Scientific Student Competition or the EELISA Student-Led Bootcamp.

At the same time, new local initiatives are emerging: for example, the HSB recently hosted its first EELISA Quiz, helping to raise awareness of the alliance within ZHAW and to connect students both locally and across the European network.

EELISA is also evolving in terms of its thematic focus. It is no longer centred solely on traditional engineering disciplines. New communities are expanding the alliance to include additional fields – such as the recently established EELISArch network, which connects architecture schools across partner institutions and to which ZHAW made a significant contribution.

“There is strong interest in collaboration within the EELISA alliance. This creates valuable opportunities in teaching and socially relevant research, both for students and for ZHAW staff. We see that our researchers encounter committed and motivated partners at EELISA institutions. This is a very positive development,” says Silvio Lorenzetti from the strategic project management of EELISA at the School of Engineering.

What comes next? Expanding cooperation, strengthening structures

With Friederike Bacciarini taking on project leadership, both operational and strategic goals are coming more sharply into focus. In the short term, the priority is to successfully deliver agreed outputs (such as new educational formats, joint programmes or digital platforms) within the alliance and to anchor them sustainably within ZHAW's structures.

At the same time, ZHAW continues to actively participate in projects led by partner institutions and is taking responsibility for key formats: it will host the EELISA Grand Meeting in 2026, followed by a PhD Symposium in 2027.

Strategically, the main focus lies on the long-term integration of EELISA processes into the organisation. The network is to be further expanded, and collaboration between students, researchers and staff within the alliance intensified.

A particular emphasis is placed on mobility: new formats such as the EELISA Mobility Fair, as well as planned inter-institutional mobility agreements, are intended to further facilitate and promote exchange within the network.

The alliance is currently in its second project phase, EELISA 2.0, in which existing structures are being consolidated, formats further developed, and collaboration within the network deepened.

At the same time, this phase marks a transition towards EELISA 3.0. The aim is to gradually evolve from a project-based initiative into a permanently embedded institutional structure. A central element of this transformation is the planned establishment of a dedicated legal entity, which will serve as the operational and strategic backbone of the alliance.

This will create the conditions for securing EELISA's activities in the long term, ensuring sustainable impact beyond 2027, and strengthening integration within the participating universities.

"All partners contribute their own cogs to the EELISA machinery. Some combinations generate additional momentum or accelerate the process – sometimes there are still frictions. Our role can now be to inject targeted dynamism into this system," says **Silvio Lorenzetti** (ZHAW School of Engineering).

The full online article can be [accessed here](#).

ZHAW SML in PRME Champions 2026-2027

The ZHAW School of Management and Law has once again been named a champion for the period 2026-2027 by PRME. A total of 50 PRME members worldwide were selected for the "**Champions Cohort**" based on their **commitment** to promoting responsible management education.

PRME Champions are regarded as **pioneers** within the PRME community. Each champion institution has a strong track record of **innovation, collaboration, and influence** in driving significant changes in the areas of **curriculum, research, partnerships, and institutional practice**, according to RME principles.



Focus areas and activities of the PRME Champions 2026/2027

Over the next two years (2026/2027), the group will work on different self-selected applied projects to advance the principles of RME and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. One goal is to strengthen responsible management education worldwide, in line with the United Nations Global Compact vision and the 2030 Agenda. The program includes a number of interactive events and online webinars as well as a dedicated online area for PRME Champion members to collaborate.

"Through online and face-to-face meetings, the SML will collaborate with PRME Champion business schools from around the world and on all continents to build and share knowledge for the advancement of responsible management education in teaching, research, and practice."

– **Alexandra Grammenou**, PRME Academic Point Person, ZHAW School of Management and Law

ZHAW SML is actively collaborating in three projects: 1) Sustainable Futures Thinking for Business Studies: Pedagogical Training for Educators led by Aalto University, Finland 2) PRME Champions as catalysts for amplifying faculty, administration and student engagement in PRME led by Newcastle University Business School, UK and 3) PRME SIP 2.0 Project led by Loughborough University, UK, Queen's University Belfast, UK and St Mary's University, Canada.

In 2026, **two in-person meetings** took place to encourage exchange and progress with the sub-group projects:

- 25th-26th June 2026 in American University in Cairo, Egypt
- 31st August- 1st September 2026 in Leuphana University, Lüneburg, Germany

The ZHAW School of Management and Law joined the PRME initiative in **2014** and has been a **PRME Champion** since **2018**. The SML has firmly established the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) within its organizational structures. Students need to understand the connections between their actions and ecological and social challenges and be aware of their responsibility as future specialists and

Partner Voices

The following statements from our partners demonstrate ways in which our collaborations at ZHAW School of Management and Law support sustainability and responsible management education.

ZHAW Sustainability Day 2026

ZHAW Sustainability Day 2026: Net Zero, Fair Future?

How ZHAW PRME, ZHAW sustainable and ZHAW School of Management and Law students have turned an annual event into a university-wide platform for sustainable development – and a hands-on lesson in responsible leadership.

The **ZHAW Sustainability Day** is an annual event that aims to raise awareness, share knowledge and foster dialogue on sustainable development. It is open to **all ZHAW students and employees**, as well as the wider public.

The idea emerged from a 2019 survey of students at the ZHAW School of Management and Law (SML), in which more than a third said they would like more activities on sustainable development and responsible business outside the curriculum. The first edition took place that same year, and in 2024 the event was renamed the ZHAW Sustainability Day. The event is **organised entirely by SML students**, with the support of ZHAW sustainable and ZHAW PRME, the SML's PRME Academic Point Person, Alexandra Grammenou.

Three partners, one platform

• SML students

Plan and run the event from start to finish as part of the modules Sustainability Mindset I and II – putting responsible leadership into practice.

• ZHAW PRME

Anchors the event in the SML's commitment to the Principles for Responsible Management Education and supports the student organising team.

- **ZHAW sustainable**

Supports the event's strategic development from an institutional perspective and links it to the ZHAW Strategy Implementation Programme for Sustainability.

The 2026 Edition



zhaw

ZHAW Sustainability Day 2026
Net Zero, Fair Future?

Exploring the human side of the climate transition, from everyday choices to global impact. Take part in the ZHAW Sustainability Day 2026 and join the dialogue.

Date/Time
Tuesday, 14 April 2026
09:00–21:00

Location
SW Building
St.-Georgen-Platz 2, 8401 Winterthur

Learn more & sign up!

On **14 April 2026**, the seventh edition of the ZHAW Sustainability Day took place in Winterthur. Under the guiding question “Net Zero, Fair Future?”, it focused on the social impacts of the net-zero transition, examining them from different perspectives and in a variety of formats. The programme addressed SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Opening Plenary

A discussion with **Prof. David Steingard** (Head UN PRME), **Francesco Bortoluzzi** (Head ZHAW sustainable) and **Prof. Jens Lehne** (Chair SML PRME Committee) on the UN Global Compact strategy for 2026–2030 and on balancing ecological, social and economic goals.



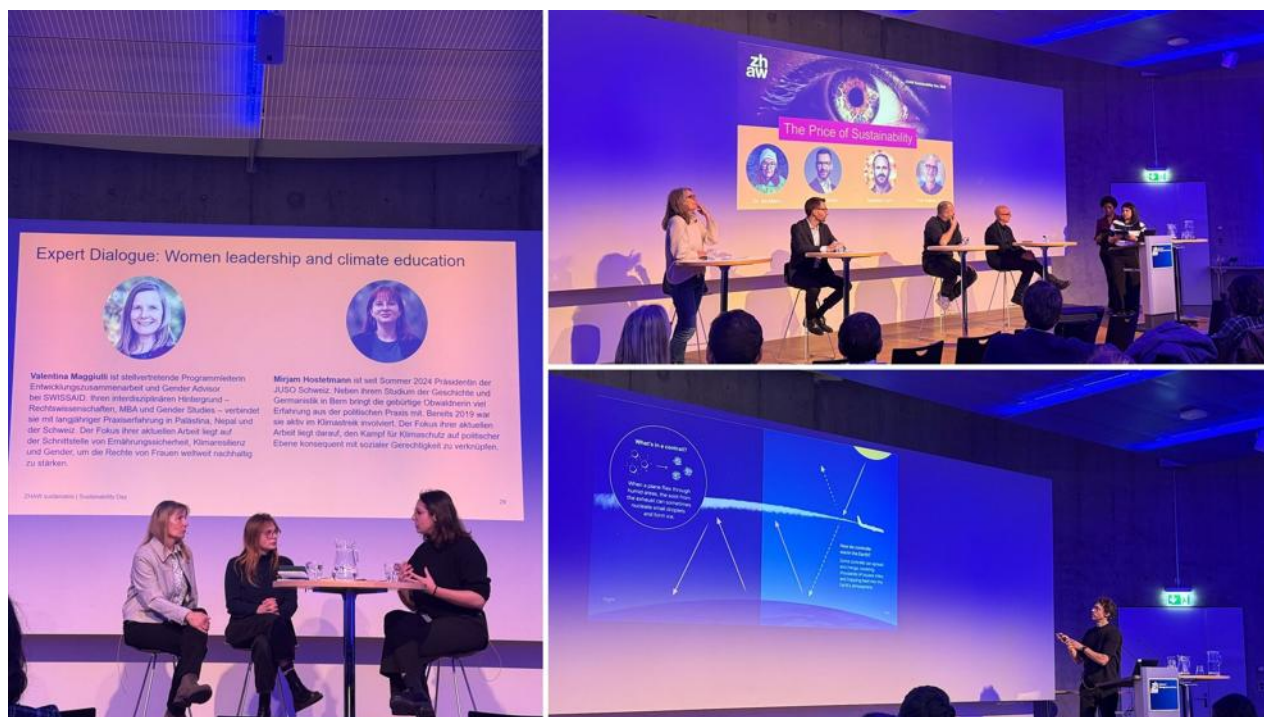
SML Bachelor's international students, Anna Tysevych (right) and Lidija Radzeviciute (left) moderated the open plenary as volunteers in the morning.

Workshops

"Lifestyle Calculator" with **myclimate** and **Eaternity** on personal ecological footprints; "Fairness in the Global Supply Chain" with **B Lab Switzerland** on labour standards and corporate responsibility; and the "Sustainable Fashion Challenge" with **Rework** on fast fashion and upcycling.

Panel Discussions/ Keynote

A dialogue on women's leadership and climate education with **Mirjam Hostetmann** (JUSO Switzerland) and **Valentina Maggiulli** (Swissaid); a panel on "The Price of Sustainability" with **Prof. Andrew Crane** (University of Bath), **Sebastian Lanz** (RRREVOLVE), **Dr Iris Menn** (Greenpeace Switzerland) and **Roland Widmer** (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation); and a keynote by **Max Vogler** (Google) on Project Contrails and how AI can reduce aviation's climate impact.



Bachelor's student Nina Pfister (OC 2026, right), Master's students Vidhi Joshi and Noreino Benison (upleft) moderated the evening panel discussions and Google Expert, Max Vogler gave a keynote about Project Contrails (down left).

A partner's perspective



Emma Sonnier

Sustainability Engagement Manager, ZHAW sustainable

"As Sustainability Engagement Manager at ZHAW sustainable, I support the strategic development of the ZHAW Sustainability Day from an institutional perspective, working alongside the School of Management and Law (SML) to extend the event's scope and impact. The partnership pursues a shared goal: to develop the ZHAW Sustainability Day into a university-wide platform that advances sustainable development across disciplines, strengthens sustainability skills and engages the ZHAW community as a whole.

"Equipping students with sustainability expertise to become agents of change is a key part of the ZHAW's transformative goals."

The Sustainability Day brings together ZHAW students and employees, industry partners and external stakeholders to engage with sustainable development. For ZHAW sustainable, the event is a concrete expression of the ZHAW Strategy Implementation Programme for Sustainability, translating its strategic goals into direct action: building sustainability literacy through dialogue, exposing participants to real-world case studies and demonstrating what a holistic approach to sustainability looks like in practice.

What sets the event apart for ZHAW sustainable is that its very conception has been turned into a learning experience for ZHAW students. As part of an SML module, students learn what responsible leadership requires and apply that knowledge directly in a real-world setting by developing and delivering the event themselves. Equipping students with sustainability expertise to become agents of change is a key part of the ZHAW's transformative goals. In the long term, we aim to amplify this impact by opening the module to collaboration with other departments across the ZHAW – the ZHAW Sustainability Day is an initiative that keeps evolving!

ZHAW sustainable looks forward to building on this collaboration with the SML and to further strengthening the initiative together, across the entire ZHAW and beyond."



The bachelor's students core organizing committee (OC) 2026 (from left to right): Laura Feusi, Nadja Lautenschlager, Miles Pinel and Jennifer Zeller.

ZHAW SML Student Organising team 2026

Sustainability Mindset I: Vania da Cruz Pinto, Joana Frey, Sabrina Gschwend, Jeeviga Karunakaran, Manon Lankkamp, Merlinda Lloqanaj, Mansan Maniyamparayil, Sina Martinez, Livia Steinkellner, Samira Suter

Sustainability Mindset II: David Csanádi, Laura Feusi, Nadja Lautenschlager, Nina Pfister, Miles Pinel, Jennifer Zeller. Supported by 14 volunteers.

2026 RME Week Highlights in Cairo

RME Week 2026 in Cairo: Connecting, Collaborating and Creating Impact

The [2026 Responsible Management Education \(RME\) Week in Cairo](#), Egypt, brought together a vibrant international community committed to advancing Responsible Management Education and its contribution to sustainable development. Hosted by the **Onsi Sawiris School of Business at The American University in Cairo (AUC)** from **28 June to 1 July**, the week created valuable opportunities for dialogue, knowledge exchange and collaboration across academia, business, international organisations and professional networks. Moreover, it allowed space to explore a city with great history and culture.



Visiting the Grand Egyptian Museum to explore history and culture was part of the 2026 RME Week greatest highlights.

For **ZHAW School of Management and Law (SML)**, participation offered a particularly valuable opportunity to strengthen and deepen relationships with **key partners** across our **international ecosystem**. Throughout the week, there was the chance to engage directly with representatives of the **PRME Secretariat (Prof. David Steingard)**, the **UN Global Compact (Chichi Bodart)**, the **Responsible Research in Business and Management (RRBM)** network, **AACSB** and **EQUIS/EFMD**, exchanging perspectives on current developments and exploring opportunities for future collaboration. The strong presence of these organisations underlined the importance of connecting responsible management education with accreditation, responsible research, societal impact and global sustainability initiatives.



Reto Steiner, Dean ZHAW SML with Prof. David Steingard, Head UN PRME and Chichi Bodart, Chief of Staff, UN Global Compact after the PRME Champions meeting in Cairo, Egypt.

During the week, **Reto Steiner, Dean of the ZHAW School of Management and Law**, signed a collaboration agreement with **Dean Sherif Kamel of the AUC Onsi Sawiris School of Business**. This marks a new page for the two institutions, which will open exciting opportunities for student exchange, academic cooperation, and joint research between Switzerland and Egypt.



Reto Steiner, Dean ZHAW SML and Sherif Kamel, Dean AUC Onsi Sawiris School of Business establishing an international partnership during the 2026 RME Week.

For ZHAW School of Management and Law, this partnership is particularly significant. The Onsi Sawiris School of Business is Egypt's **leading business school** and, through its location in Cairo, provides an important gateway to North Africa and the Middle East – two **dynamic regions of growing economic and geopolitical importance**.

"Our institutions also share an important understanding of what responsible management education should achieve: combining a strong theoretical and academic foundation with relevance to the real-world challenges facing businesses and society.

The partnership will enable students to experience different markets, cultures, and business environments first-hand, while creating new opportunities for faculty and researchers to exchange perspectives and develop knowledge across regions. International collaboration is about more than mobility. It is about connecting ideas, people, and perspectives – and building lasting bridges between institutions and regions."

– **Reto Steiner**, Dean ZHAW School of Management and Law

Another highlight was the launch of the **2026 Positive Impact Rating (PIR)** results of business schools during the PRME Global Forum. The new edition of the report brings together perspectives from students and faculty and provides an important lens on how business schools translate their commitment to positive impact into institutional practice.



Alexandra Grammenou, ZHAW SML Academic Point Person with PRME Champions colleagues from Canada and the United Kingdom in the 2026 RME Week Reception.

Yet, perhaps the most fruitful and inspiring part of the experience was the time spent with fellow **PRME Champions 2026-2027**. The Champions Meeting, held ahead of the Global Forum (26-27 June), provided dedicated space for colleagues to work intensively on their respective **sub-group projects**, **exchange experiences** and **jointly develop ideas** and **practical solutions**. This collaborative work reflects the very essence of the PRME Champions community: moving beyond individual institutional initiatives towards **collective learning, co-creation and shared action**.

"Coming together with colleagues from across the globe in Egypt, a place where history is present at every turn, was truly inspiring. The exchange gave me important insights and empowerment that will shape how we continue to advance Responsible Management Education at ZHAW School of Management and Law."

— **Alexandra Grammenou**, ZHAW SML PRME Academic Point Person



Alexandra Grammenou, ZHAW SML PRME Academic Point Person with the PRME Champions 2026-2027 in Cairo, Egypt.

For ZHAW SML, Cairo was therefore much more than an international conference. It was an opportunity to **strengthen partnerships, contribute to a global community of practice** and **bring new ideas and connections back to our own work** in RME.

Continue telling your story

Designing the future of business: Vidhi Joshi at the 2026 SDG Design Jam How will the future of business look like?

On **2 September 2026**, ZHAW School of Management and Law student Vidhi Joshi (MSc in International Business) travelled to Lüneburg, Germany, to take part in the **2026 Future Business Innovation Design Jam**. The **one-day student event** opened the 13th Responsible Management Education Research Conference (RMERC), hosted by Leuphana University Lüneburg. The Design Jam was organised by the **PRME DACH Chapter** together with **FHGR** (University of Applied Sciences of the Grisons). It gave students from across the region a day to strengthen their future skills and to rethink the role of business in a sustainable world through a playful, design-thinking approach.



ZHAW SML Master's student Vidhi Joshi in the middle together with her project team in the 2026 SDG Design Jam.

The day followed **four guiding ideas**. Participants were asked to *re-imagine future business scenarios*, *resist unsustainable practices*, *reclaim and redefine responsibility*, and *create new business concepts*. The main tool was the **Future Box Business**, a card-based method developed by **Übormorgen** together with **PRME**. Created by educator and innovation expert **Dr. Helga Mayr**, it helps groups explore future trends and scenarios, identify challenges, and turn ideas into prototypes that are then tested, presented and reflected on. The tool draws on design thinking and futures literacy and is used by companies, start-ups and universities.

The session was facilitated by Dr. Helga Mayr and Prof. Christian Baumgartner. Helga Mayr is a business educator and lecturer specialising in design thinking and education for sustainable development. Christian Baumgartner is a landscape ecologist and member of the PRME DACH Chapter Steering Committee. Working in interdisciplinary teams with students from other PRME universities, Vidhi developed a concept with her team called **"GEN Z UNITED"** providing solutions to a future challenge connected with SDG 8- Decent Work and Economic Growth. The students presented the results to the audience in the evening and they could then engage with researchers and educators working on responsible management education during the RMER Conference.



The solution provided through the project concept "GEN Z United" contributing to SDG 8.

"What I really enjoyed was that it wasn't just about sitting and listening to talks. We were put into teams, given a challenge, and had to work together to come up with ideas and solutions to build a prototype. Our discussions went from identifying problems and stakeholders to thinking about possible solutions and how they could actually create an impact. There were so many different perspectives in the room, which made the whole process even more interesting. For me, this was a very different kind of learning: learning by doing, discussing, questioning ideas, and trying to turn them into something tangible."

— **Vidhi Joshi**, Master's student in International Business, ZHAW SML



Vidhi Joshi during the presentation of the project concept to the 13th RMER academic audience

Vidhi's participation reflects ZHAW SML's commitment to the PRME Students initiative. It shows how students become active contributors to the conversation on responsible business rather than just learning about it.

PRME DACH Chapter Meeting in Lüneburg, Germany

PRME DACH Chapter Meeting – 2 September 2026, Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany

The PRME DACH Chapter held a hybrid meeting at Leuphana University Lüneburg just before the 13th Responsible Management Education Research (RMER) Conference opened.



Members of the PRME DACH Chapter during the annual in-person meeting in Lüneburg, Germany.

One highlight was the unanimous election of a new **Steering Committee** for a two-year term. **Lisa Fröhlich** is Chapter Chair and **Regina Obexer** is Vice Chair. The other roles went to:

- **Alexandra Grammenou:** Chapter/Working Group Liaison
- **Anna-Theresia Becker:** Student Liaison
- **Alexander Herzner:** Research
- **Anastassios Fountis:** Signatory Recruitment & Relations
- **Christian Baumgartner:** Treasurer & Events

Katharina de Melo has since agreed to take on Communication. With this new structure, the chapter has clear responsibilities for research, student engagement, partnerships and growth.

"I am honoured to take on the role of Chapter/Working Group Liaison, and I look forward to this journey with PRME DACH. My aim is to build bridges between our chapter, the other PRME Chapters, the Working Groups and the PRME Champions, so that we can learn from one another and grow our shared impact."

– **Alexandra Grammenou**, PRME Academic Point Person, ZHAW School of Management and Law

Members also heard about new ways to connect with **PRME's 17 Working Groups**. These include a virtual "**Meet the PRME Working Groups**" event, a showcase in December, and an open call for new Working Group proposals.

Several initiatives also moved forward:

- **Future Box design jam:** Christian Baumgartner presented the cards and templates he developed, and hands-on workshops for signatories are planned for autumn 2026.
- **European PRME Students Ambassador Programme:** the chapter will develop it further together with PRME Chapter France/Benelux, with the aim of strengthening student collaboration across Europe. The new European Student Representatives also took part in a conference panel.
- **Project funding:** PRME DACH e.V. invites members to submit project ideas, and selected ones can receive financial support.

Looking ahead, an online chapter meeting in December 2026 will set priorities for 2027.



The newly elected PRME DACH Steering Committee 2026-2027 (from left to right): Anna-Theresia Becker, Regina Obexer, Lisa Fröhlich, Christian Baumgartner, Alexandra Grammenou, Alexander Herzner, and Anastasios Fountis

Highlights from the 13th RMER Conference

Highlights from the 13th RMER Conference at Leuphana University Lüneburg

ZHAW School of Management and Law was delighted to take part in the **13th Responsible Management Education Research (RMER) Conference**, held at **Leuphana University Lüneburg** from **2 to 4 September 2026** under the theme "*Reclaim, Resist, Reimagine: Sustainability and the Future of Responsible Management Education*" represented by Alexandra Grammenou, ZHAW SML Academic Point Person.

The week began with the second in-person **PRME Champions meeting** (31 August – 1 September). There ZHAW SML was part of the launch of a new project on **evaluating PRME Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) reports** across the community that will be finalized in the **beginning of 2027**. We also had time to advance our sub-group projects with **Aalto University (Paula Schönach)** and **Newcastle University Business School (Noemi Sinkovics)**, which we at ZHAW SML are proud to actively support.



The second in-person PRME Champions Meeting took place in Leuphana University of Lüneburg

A lively hybrid discussion followed with **Prof. David Steingard** on the future vision of PRME as the initiative approaches its 20th anniversary in 2027. Together with colleagues in the room and online, there was reflection on how RME should evolve over the next decade.

ZHAW SML had the opportunity to **co-host a conference track** with our PRME Champions colleagues, *"Imagining Desirable Futures: Responsible Management Research and Futures Methodologies,"* exploring how futures thinking can shape both research and teaching.



The group of the track about "Imagining Desirable Futures" co-hosted by Anne-Marie Ryan, Paula Schönach and Alexandra Grammenou.

Alexandra Grammenou presented the design of a new course inspired by the **ZHAW Sustainability Day**. The module is embedded in our Bachelor's International Management curriculum and lets students work hands-on with sustainability, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and responsible management.



Alexandra Grammenou presenting in the 13th RMER Conference.

The dialogue continued in thought-provoking workshops with colleagues from the **Global Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI)**. Beyond our individual projects, the conference offered valuable opportunities for exchange and inspiration with ZHAW SML's partners in the **PRME DACH Chapter**, **PRME Working Groups**, the editors of the newly launched **PRME Scientific Journals** and the global responsible management education community.



ZHAW SML is a proud member of the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI).

The return from Lüneburg came once again with new ideas, stronger partnerships and renewed commitment to reimagining management education for a more responsible future.



Practice

We adopt responsible and accountable management principles in our own governance and operations.

How We Define Practice

Practice means living our PRME commitment beyond teaching and research: reducing flight emissions, lowering meat consumption in our canteens, and improving energy efficiency in our buildings, while fostering diversity, inclusion, and a culture that safeguards personal integrity, ensuring coherence between what we teach and how we act as an institution.

Institutional Policies and Practices

- ❖ Carbon reduction or offset commitments
- ❖ Ethical data sourcing guides
- ❖ Local staff/student/faculty transportation
- ❖ Open-access guides
- ❖ Professional training opportunities
- ❖ Sustainability strategy or strategic plan (school or university level)
- ❖ Travel guides
- ❖ Greenhouse gas emissions
- ❖ Curriculum guidelines
- ❖ Buildings/real estate
- ❖ Accreditation body recommendation documents
- ❖ Student equity, diversity, inclusion

Policy Documents Related to RME and/or Sustainability

Z_SD_Sustainability_Strategy_ZHAW

View document  Download document 

Practice Voices

The following statement from stakeholders at ZHAW School of Management and Law demonstrates our commitment to sustainable and responsible practices.

Winterthur to Belfast by train and boat!

[Professor Paula Mónica Castro Pareja](#) attended the annual conference of the **European Political Science Society** in June 2026, where she presented her research on global climate negotiations in a panel on **Climate Politics**. The conference took place in **Belfast, UK**, but she did not fly there from Zurich, she travelled **by train and boat from Winterthur instead!**



Taking the train from Zurich to Paris

"To organise the trip, I used [SimpleTrain](#)," she shares. "They put together a working itinerary, bought all the tickets and made all the required train and ferry reservations for me, including the Interrail pass. The journey from **Winterthur to Belfast** worked perfectly. The way back, not so much: one of the trains in France was substantially delayed, possibly because of the high temperatures, though it was also the day of a massive music festival in Paris. So I had to stay the night in **Strasbourg**, as there were no further connections back to Switzerland that day. Nonetheless, I'm happy to have made the trip that way. It allowed me to meet a friend briefly in **London** between connections, and to see a little of **Liverpool**."



Continuing by boat from Liverpool to Belfast with Stena Line- Connecting Europe for a Sustainable Future

SimpleTrain is a Swiss start-up dedicated to helping travellers reduce their CO₂ emissions, and it is one of the many online platforms listed in the [Movetia Toolkit](#), which offers students and staff at universities and colleges tips on how to travel to their exchange destinations in a more environmentally friendly way.

ZHAW recommends using **train or long-distance bus connections** instead of air travel, as well as replacing trips with **digital alternatives**. For destinations that can be reached in **under six hours**, members are asked to avoid flying (see the ZHAW Green Impact Book). In certain cases, air travel is unavoidable for international meetings; here, ZHAW recommends pragmatic approaches such as **bundling tasks** or **limiting frequency**.

Individual ZHAW organisational units are free to adopt stricter measures for air travel. Achieving ZHAW's sustainability goals requires the participation of all ZHAW members. ZHAW recognises that reducing flight emissions involves several trade-offs, but trusts in the shared commitment of its members to find innovative and practicable solutions. **Progress in reducing flight emissions is reviewed annually by the University Executive Board.**

Continue telling your story

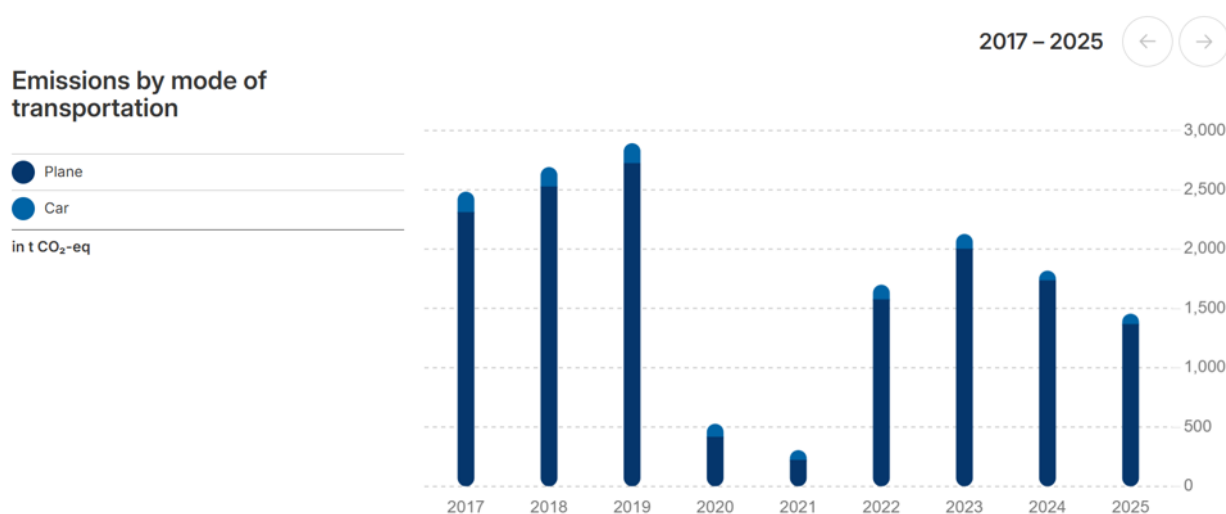
Carbon_Accounting_Report_2026

View document  Download document 

ZHAW Mobility Emissions 2017-2025

Where mobility-related emissions come from

Business mobility includes all journeys paid for by the ZHAW on behalf of staff and guests, whether by plane, train or car. By far the largest share is attributable to **air travel**. A single long-haul flight produces more emissions than hundreds of rail journeys. The trend since 2017 has been largely shaped by the pandemic: emissions fell significantly and rose again as travel activities resumed. Since then, successful reductions have been achieved. Supported by the [Challenge Accepted](#) campaign, which promotes alternatives rather than restrictions, air travel emissions are now around 44% below pre-pandemic levels.

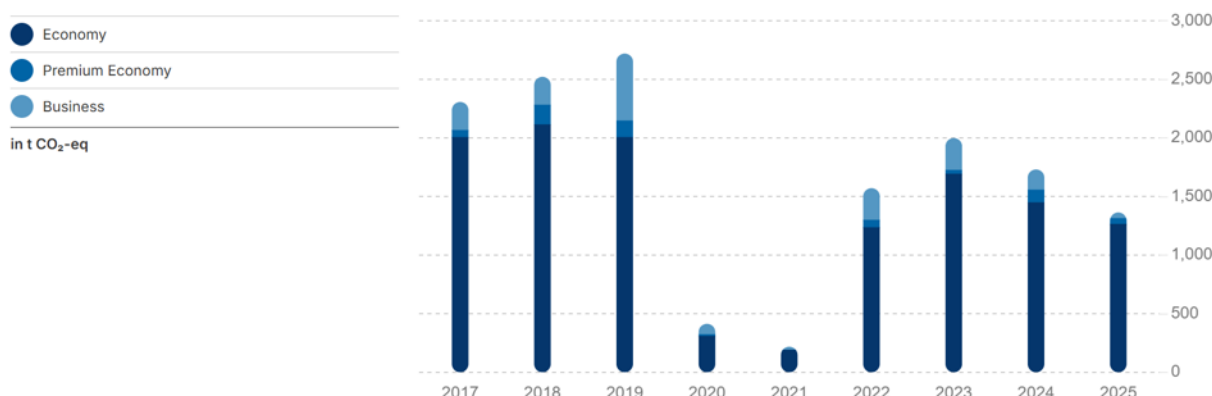


Source: [Mobility - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

What determines air travel emissions

The emissions from a flight depend on both the distance and travel class: long-haul flights account for the majority of emissions, while a business-class seat generates up to three times more emissions per passenger than an economy-class seat. The additional climate impacts of flying at high altitudes are also taken into account. The ZHAW therefore multiplies direct CO₂ emissions by a factor of 2.7, based on a [study](#) by the ZHAW Centre for Aviation, which recommends a weighting factor of this order of magnitude.

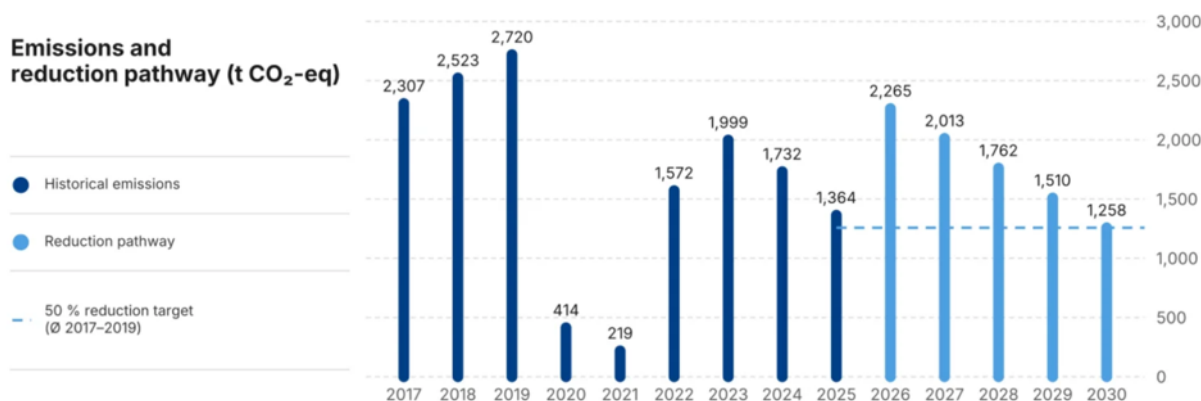
Emissions by flight class



Source: [Mobility - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

ZHAW halves its air travel emissions ahead of schedule

Since 2020, the ZHAW has been tracking its air travel emissions, one of the largest contributors to its carbon accounting. Since 2023, it has been working on reducing these emissions through a system of emissions budgets assigned to the individual Schools. By 2025, the ZHAW was already several years ahead of its planned reduction pathway: on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis, emissions had more than halved compared with the baseline period.



Historical emissions 2017-2025 and reduction pathway until 2030:
The 50 % reduction target has already been nearly achieved as of 2025.

Source: [Mobility - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

Fewer emissions despite a growing workforce

A look at emissions per full-time equivalent demonstrates just how successful the reductions achieved in recent years have actually been. As the ZHAW has grown during this period, progress becomes visible only when emissions are viewed in relation to the size of the university. The coming years will show to what extent emissions can be reduced further as well as which journeys will remain necessary for a university with an international network.

The above information is based on the [ZHAW Sustainability Report 2026](#).

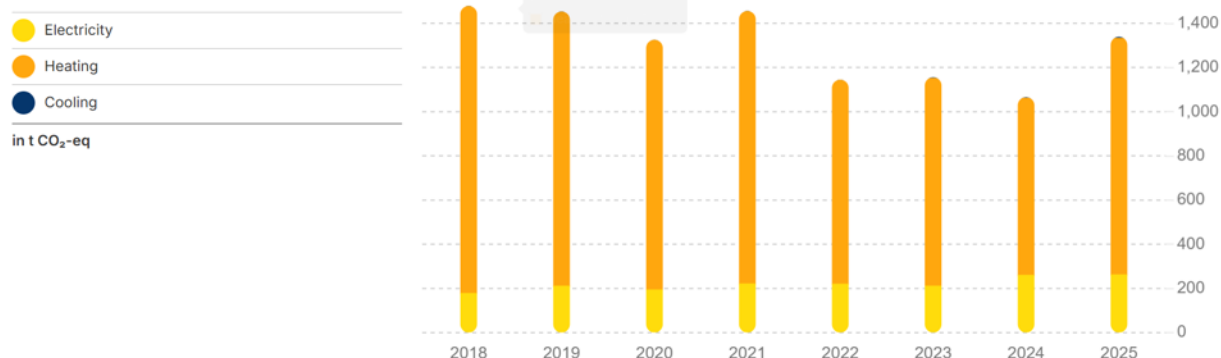
ZHAW Energy Emissions 2018-2025

Significant Reduction in Energy Consumption

The ZHAW's energy-related emissions have fallen significantly since 2017, mainly as a result of the gradual replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems.

It remains to be seen how much further these emissions can be reduced. As the university grows and digitalisation progresses, electricity consumption is expected to rise. And since neither Switzerland's electricity mix nor more sustainable heating systems such as district heating are entirely emission-free, it will be difficult to reduce emissions below a certain baseline level.

Emissionen by source



Source: [Energy - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

Where energy-related emissions come from

The ZHAW's energy-related emissions are derived from heating, electricity and cooling. Heating accounts for the largest share. Accordingly, the reduction achieved since 2017 has been driven primarily by the replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems: where oil and gas heating systems have been replaced by district heating, heat pumps or woodchip heating systems, emissions have fallen significantly. In addition to energy efficiency, the choice of energy source used for heating therefore plays a crucial role.

This is particularly evident in the heating system at the Grüental campus in Wädenswil. Due to an extended heat-pump failure in 2025, additional heating had to be provided using natural gas: gas consumption rose significantly, leading to a sharp increase in heating-related emissions.

Unlike mobility- and resource-related emissions, energy-related emissions barely declined during the pandemic, as buildings need to be heated whether they are fully occupied or empty. Furthermore, the decision on when to replace a heating system is generally beyond the ZHAW's direct control: the buildings are either owned by the Canton or are leased from it. The ZHAW is working with the Canton to achieve further progress in this area.

Differences between the ZHAW's locations

The ZHAW occupies more than 70 buildings across seven campuses at its three sites in Winterthur, Zurich and Wädenswil. How much energy a campus consumes depends first and foremost on its size: the more space that needs to be heated, cooled and illuminated, the higher the consumption. Usage patterns are equally as important. Laboratories, workshops and server rooms require many times more energy than offices and classrooms do. And finally, user behaviour also matters, including how rooms are ventilated and heated and whether appliances and lights are switched off when not in use.

What makes up energy consumption and emissions?

The share of renewable energy used for heat generation continues to grow steadily. The average share of renewable energy since 2023 has stood at just under 80 percent. This is primarily due to the declining use of fossil fuels such as natural gas and heating oil. The ZHAW already meets almost all of its electricity needs from renewable sources.

Energy-related emissions have fallen by a third since 2017. At the same time, one crucial question remains unanswered: when will the ZHAW be able to heat entirely without fossil fuels?

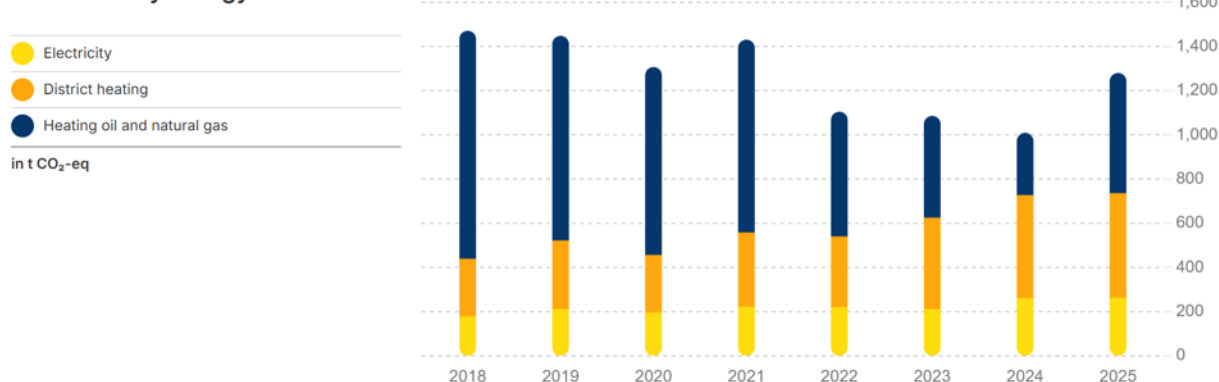
One figure speaks for itself: emissions fell from more than 1,600 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2017 to around 1,100 tonnes in 2024, **a reduction of 33%**. This substantial decrease is primarily due to the gradual replacement of fossil-fuel heating systems with district heating and heat pumps.

The decline is most evident in the case of heating oil and natural gas. While they accounted for over 1,230 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2017, making them the ZHAW's most significant source of emissions, by 2024 they were responsible for just under 260 tonnes. This represents **a reduction of almost 80%** and shows that the chosen reduction strategy is delivering results.

The share of emissions attributable to district heating has increased since 2017. This is due to the proportion of fossil fuels that remains part of district-heating systems, depending on the energy mix used for generation. Switching from oil to district heating significantly reduces emissions, but does not eliminate them entirely.

When the last fossil-fuel heating systems at the ZHAW will be replaced depends on building conditions, cantonal regulations and the available alternatives – factors that the ZHAW cannot control entirely on its own and can only address in coordination with the Canton of Zurich.

Emissions by energy carrier



Source: [Energy - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

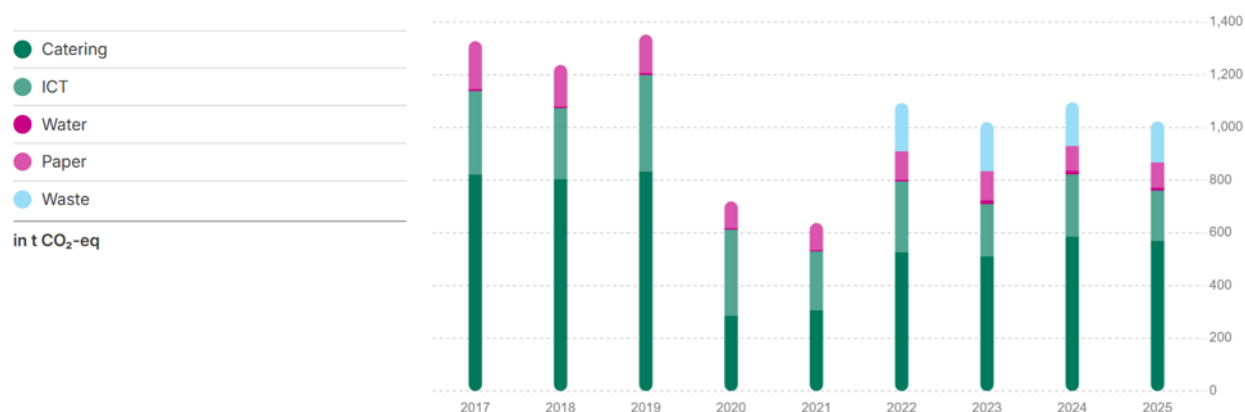
The above information is based on the [ZHAW Sustainability Report 2026](#).

ZHAW Resource Consumption Emissions 2017-2025

Different resource categories

Within the resources category, the ZHAW assesses five areas: **catering, ICT, paper, water and waste**. Together, these produce fewer emissions than business mobility or energy consumption. The largest single contributor is catering in the canteens.

These emissions are continuously generated anew: **they arise from procurement**, i.e. from the items that the ZHAW purchases. The key factors are procurement volumes and how long the devices are used for. The most effective measures therefore lie in procuring less and using procured items for longer.



Source: [Resources - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

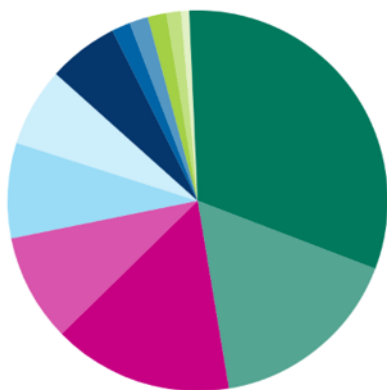
Continuous reduction across all areas

When it comes to resources, there is no single major lever. Progress is achieved through continuous reductions across all areas. Apart from the pandemic, developments since 2017 have therefore not been characterised by major leaps, but rather by the cumulative effect of many small changes.

In some areas, no centralised data collection has yet been implemented. These include, for example, laboratory operations with their chemicals and equipment as well as furniture and the embodied emissions of buildings. These areas are not included in the reported figures. Actual emissions within the resources category are therefore correspondingly higher. The ZHAW is working to improve data quality in these areas step by step.

It is not quantity alone that matters

Animal-based products account for the largest share of catering-related emissions, followed by vegetables, fruit and potatoes. The underlying causes differ: meat, dairy and egg products have high emission factors, meaning that significantly more emissions are produced per kilogramme than for average plant-based products. Vegetables have one of the lowest emission factors and account for their share solely from the quantity purchased. The menu offering determines which products are purchased and in what quantities. This is a key starting point for reducing emissions, although it is not under the sole control of the ZHAW: as a cantonal institution, the ZHAW procures catering services for its canteen through public tenders and works with a catering provider that must operate on a financially sustainable basis, while ensuring that meals remain healthy, affordable and attractive for students, employees and external guests. A more climate-friendly offering can therefore only have an impact if it is actually chosen. Change cannot simply be mandated. Instead, it must be tested and introduced gradually through recipe development, greater variety and the placement of options within the menu.



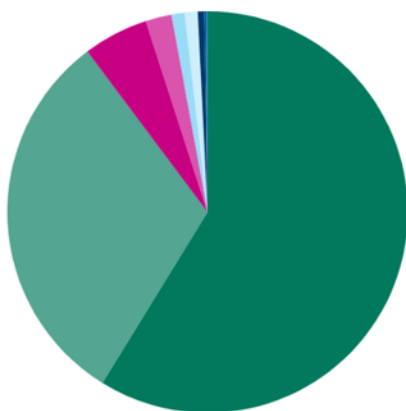
568 t CO₂-eq

Emissions from catering by product group

Meat	30.8%
Vegetables and fruit	16.5%
Eggs and dairy products	15.3%
Other ingredients	9.2%
Starchy side dishes	8.1%
Hot drinks and milk-based drinks	6.7%
Baked goods	6.0%
Fats and oils	1.6%
Sweets	1.6%
Non-alcoholic drinks	1.6%
Alcoholic drinks	1.2%
Meat substitutes	0.7%
Fish	0.7%
Total	568 t CO₂-eq

Source: [Resources - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

ICT Device Inventory



190.5 t CO₂-eq

Emissions by device class

Laptops	58.8%
Desktops	31.0%
Servers	5.2%
Tablets	2.1%
Switches	1.0%
Printers	1.0%
Mobile phones	0.5%
Access points	0.2%
Monitors	0.1%
Total	190.5 t CO₂-eq

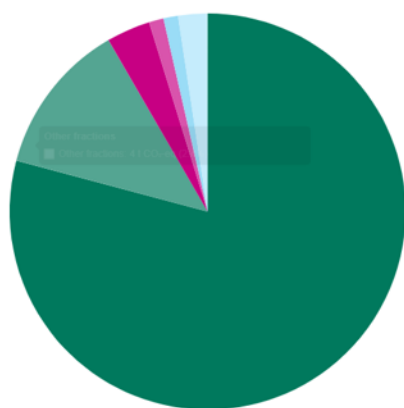
Source: Weight and emissions by device class in 2025 retrieved from [Resources - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

Reduction through device choice and longer service life

As digitalisation progresses, the demand for ICT devices is growing. The key factors here are both the type of device selected and its service life: the longer a device remains in use, the lower the emissions per year of use. The ZHAW deliberately extends device lifespans. Retired devices are either reused internally or refurbished through a certified broker.

Waste Emissions

In terms of resources, the ZHAW generated around 1,120 tonnes of CO₂-eq in 2024, of which **188 tonnes of CO₂-eq** came from **waste**. When people see the waste figures in the ZHAW's carbon accounting for the first time, they instinctively look for ways to improve waste management: better separation, more recycling, less waste in general. The real lever, however, lies at the beginning of the chain, long before anything reaches a waste container.



168.04 t CO₂-eq
Emissions by waste category

Combustible operational waste	79.1%
Chemicals and other hazardous waste	12.5%
Other composite products	3.6%
Paper	1.2%
Garden waste	1.2%
Other fractions	2.4%
Kitchen waste and food waste	0.0%
Metals	0.0%
Electronics	0.0%
Total	168.04 t CO ₂ -eq

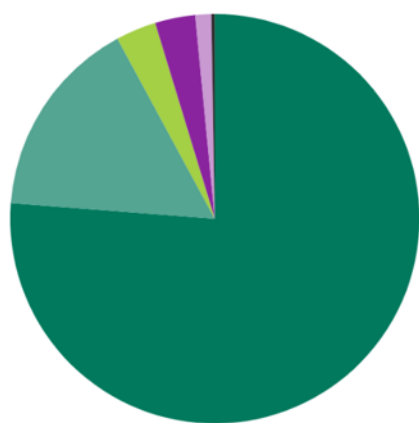
Source: Weight and emissions by waste fraction in 2024 retrieved from [Resources - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

What actually ends up in the waste container

In 2024, the ZHAW generated around 255 tonnes of combustible operational waste, the largest single category by weight. The same picture emerges from the emissions data: around 133 tonnes of CO₂-eq come from this single waste stream. The rest is distributed across more than half a dozen smaller categories, ranging from electronics and paper to green and hazardous waste. These waste streams arise from both teaching and research as well as from day-to-day operations.

Prevention before disposal

The foremost priority when dealing with operational waste is prevention. Everything that is procured will eventually have to be disposed of or recycled. The most effective levers therefore lie in procurement. Only then come recycling and, for the remaining residual waste, disposal. Since 2022, the ZHAW has been recording its waste by material fraction and collecting it separately at all its sites. Combustible operational waste accounts for the largest share of emissions, as it can neither be recycled nor reused as a raw material.



157.42 t CO₂-eq
Emissions by waste category

Combustible operational waste	76.2%
Chemicals and other hazardous waste	15.9%
Other composite products	3.2%
Paper	3.2%
Garden waste	1.3%
Other fractions	0.3%
Kitchen waste and food waste	0.0%
Metals	0.0%
Electronics	0.0%
Total	157.42 t CO₂-eq

Source: Weight and emissions by waste fraction in 2025 retrieved from [Resources - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

What is ultimately thrown away is usually determined at the time of purchase: was the right quantity procured, with the right specification, and at the right time? A blanket reduction in procurement volumes does not go far enough. A procurement culture that is more closely aligned with actual needs in operations, teaching and research is more effective.

Public procurement has its own logic

The ZHAW is not entirely free in this regard: as a cantonal university, it is bound by public procurement law. Framework agreements, minimum quantities and multi-year tendering processes are designed for predictability rather than day-to-day precision. The extent to which these rules allow for more demand-driven procurement varies from case to case. Further information can be found in the [ZHAW's procurement policy](#) (in German only).

The above information was retrieved from the [ZHAW Sustainability Report 2026](#).

ZHAW Social Sustainability and Diversity Figures 2017-2025

Social Sustainability and Diversity

In the area of social sustainability, the ZHAW collects data on workload levels, gender diversity and shared leadership arrangements. The data collected provides an insight, but does not present a comprehensive picture of the situation at the ZHAW.

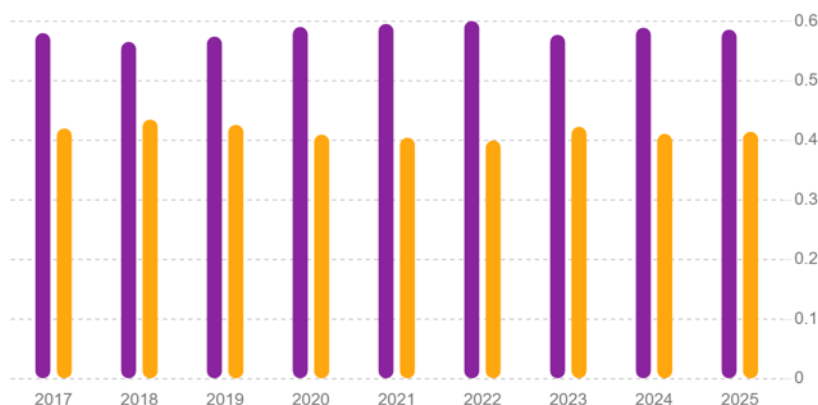
A gender-inclusive leadership culture

Equal participation of all genders at every level is a core value at the ZHAW. Through targeted measures such as flexible working and leadership models, as well as mentoring programmes, the ZHAW is committed to achieving more balanced gender representation.

Gender ratio across all management levels

- Share of men in management positions
- Share of women in management positions

Gender Equality Management an der ZHAW (in German only)



Source: [Social - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)

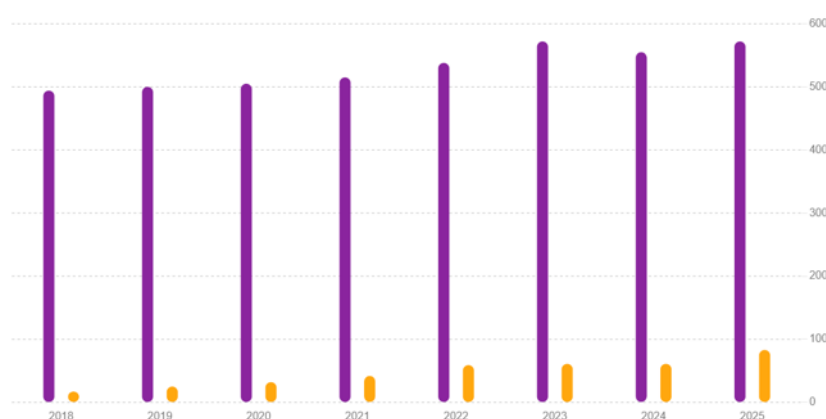
Flexible leadership and working models

Shared leadership arrangements and part-time employment are key tools used by the ZHAW to make leadership and work more flexible and to improve the compatibility of private and professional life.

More than half of employees work part-time, and the proportion of shared leadership arrangements has also risen steadily in recent years. In 2025, **shared leadership arrangements** reached a record high of 14.5%.

Development of shared leadership arrangements

- Total managers
- Shared leadership arrangements



[Social - ZHAW Sustainability Report](#)



Share

We share our successes and failures with each other to enable our collective learning and best live our common values and purpose.



How We Define Share

We understand sharing as the active exchange of knowledge and recognition within and beyond our institution. Internally, we organize department and team events celebrating faculty achievements; externally, we engage in industry events and disseminate our expertise through media, conferences, and forums, fostering dialogue between academia, business, and society at large.

Engagement Opportunities

ZHAW School of Management and Law offers transparent engagement opportunities for members of our institution and community to contribute to our sustainability and responsibility efforts in the following ways:

- ❖ Public events and panel discussions
- ❖ Open faculty and student meetings and town halls
- ❖ Feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, suggestion boxes)
- ❖ Sustainability-focused research and collaboration Opportunities
- ❖ Boards and advisory committees
- ❖ Annual reports
- ❖ Community events and consultation forums
- ❖ Publicly accessible sustainability data and dashboards

Communication Audiences

ZHAW School of Management and Law communicates its policies and progress on sustainable development and responsibility with:

- ❖ Accreditation bodies
- ❖ Boards and advisory committees
- ❖ Business and industry partners
- ❖ Faculty and staff
- ❖ Research and academic networks
- ❖ Media and public relations channels

Sharing Voices

The following statement from stakeholders at ZHAW School of Management and Law demonstrates our commitment to sharing and learning from sustainability and responsible management practices.

ZHAW-Impact Magazine: Why in-depth science communication matters Sharing Knowledge, Creating Impact

Sara Blaser, Editor-in-Chief of ZHAW-Impact, on turning research into stories, reaching readers across print and digital channels, and why in-depth science communication still matters in the age of 15-second reels.

About the magazine

ZHAW-Impact is the **official magazine** of the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) distributed twice per year in around **25'000 copies**. It provides information on current research projects, study programmes and continuing education courses, and each issue is dedicated to a main topic. The magazine is aimed at ZHAW graduates, partners of the university, and representatives from business, politics, the media, and health and social institutions. Its sections range from alumni and researcher portraits to expert interviews, opinion pieces, research news, insights into study programmes and highlights from campus life. A **free subscription** is available in print (German only) or digitally, with an info-mail sent on publication. The complete magazine can also be downloaded as a PDF, and earlier issues are available in an online archive.



2/2025



1/2025



2/2024



1/2024



4/2023



3/2023



2/2023



1/2023

The Responsibility for Impact

How long have you held the position of Editor-in Chief of the ZHAW-Impact magazine, and what does it entail?

Sara Blaser: I have held this role for two years. I am responsible for ensuring that the magazine is published on time and to the highest quality. This involves selecting article topics (together with the Corporate Communications content team and the content managers from the departments), writing articles myself, briefing other authors, leading the production process and serving as the point of contact for all external service providers, such as authors, the printing company and advertising sales. I also maintain the website. Above all, however, my role is about quality assurance.

When was the magazine founded, and why was it created? How does it align with the ZHAW's strategy and its commitments to responsibility and sustainability?

Sara Blaser: The magazine was established in 2008, one year after four schools of higher education merged to form the ZHAW. Its main objective is to give the public insights into the ZHAW's activities in research, teaching, continuing education and services. In doing so, it underlines one of the main pillars of our strategy: creating and sharing knowledge.

"Impact" is a word that gets used a lot. What does it actually mean to you, and has its meaning shifted over the years?

Sara Blaser: As a university of applied sciences, we strive not only to create knowledge but also to translate it into practical solutions for societal challenges. "Impact" has always been, and will remain, the objective of what we do at the ZHAW every day.

"We strive not only to create knowledge but also to translate it into practical solutions for societal challenges."

From Research to Story

How do you decide which research or projects make it into the magazine? What is the filter, and how do you prioritise?

Sara Blaser: The selection process is not easy, because there are so many activities worth featuring. An important filter is that a project can be understood by people without expert knowledge. Each issue has a main topic, which helps with prioritising. Another important principle is that all departments are adequately represented in every issue.

Academic work is often dense and complicated. How do you translate it for a general audience without stripping out what makes it true?

Sara Blaser: This is one of the main challenges in science communication. A good approach is to show what problem the project is trying to solve and how it goes about solving it – the bigger picture rather than the methodological details.

“Show what problem the project is trying to solve – the bigger picture rather than the methodological details.”

Reaching Readers

Who are you really writing for, and who would you most like to reach that you have not reached yet?

Sara Blaser: Essentially, we write for everyone who is interested in research, higher education and the Canton of Zurich. We are happy with our readership, but we have yet to receive feedback from a Federal Councillor, so there is certainly still something to work towards.

What does accessible and inclusive communication look like in practice for you – in terms of language, format and the channels you choose?

Sara Blaser: We use inclusive, journalistic language, and we reach our readers on the channels they prefer, be it the print magazine, the online magazine or social media. In our online communication, we adhere to accessibility standards, such as subtitles in videos, colour contrast and alternative text for images.

How do you evaluate the magazine’s impact? How do you know whether a story has landed?

Sara Blaser: For the online magazine, we evaluate visits, clicks and other KPIs. For the print magazine, we conduct reader surveys.

Why do you still produce printed copies of the magazine rather than only an online version?

Sara Blaser: Online magazines are not ideal for extended reading. In our latest reader survey, 60% of readers said they would not read the magazine if it were only available online. I think both channels, print and online, are important because they address different target groups. People who are interested in the ZHAW as a whole prefer the printed edition, whereas the online magazine caters to people who are searching for information on specific topics.

“60% of readers said they would not read the magazine if it were only available online.”

Looking Ahead

What is the greatest tension or challenge in your work?

Sara Blaser: Realising that more and more people prefer snackable content to long reads. I see it as our responsibility to provide society with in-depth information about the world of science – something that cannot be done properly in 15-second reels.

If sharing knowledge well is part of a university’s responsibility, what will doing it well look like five years from now?

Sara Blaser: Considering the developments in AI in recent years, I would not dare to forecast how we will communicate in five years' time. However, the ZHAW is promoting an open science strategy and will continue to do so in the future, using channels that are accessible to everyone who is interested: open-access papers, open educational resources, podcasts, videos and magazines such as ZHAW-Impact.



Sara Blaser

ZHAW-Impact Editor-in-Chief

ZHAW President's Office

Corporate Communications

[Contact](#)

For more information on ZHAW-Impact visit: [ZHAW Impact the magazine on applied sciences: zhaw-impact](#)

Communication Barriers

ZHAW School of Management and Law faces the following barriers in transparent communications:



**Data privacy
regulations**

Continue telling your story

Climate Week Zurich 2026

Shaping sustainable leadership at Climate Week Zurich 2026

In May 2026, the **Zurich Center for Sustainability Leadership (ZCSL)** at the ZHAW School of Management and Law took part in the first [Climate Week Zurich](#). The inaugural edition ran from **4 to 9 May 2026** with **more than 270 events**, all showing how **climate impact** can be accelerated in everyday life and business. The week brought together **244 partners** across **12 topical streams** and counted over **16,000 participations**. ZHAW joined as an academic partner, alongside other Swiss universities and public-sector institutions. Across **four events** in Zurich and Winterthur, ZCSL invited participants to look at sustainability from three angles: **nature, leadership and corporate practice**.

The week began outdoors. On 5 May, ZCSL Executive Director **Regula K. Broger** and ranger **Salome Spycher** of Stadtgrün led a **90-minute walk** through the **Winterthur forest**. Participants learned **how the forest protects people**, supplies oxygen and water, regulates the climate and renews itself. They also discussed how this **natural space** can be preserved and developed for the future.



Impressions from the excursion in the Winterthur Forest during Climate Week Zurich 2026.

In the afternoon of May 6 participants visited [UMAMI](#) in Illnau-Effretikon to gain insight into **an urban food system** based on a **closed-loop ecosystem** and **high biodiversity**. With more than 100 species, UMAMI demonstrates how sustainable food production, resource efficiency and culinary quality can be combined. The event included a short introduction by **Sauro Bianchi (ZCSL)** and **Nico Pfändler (ZCSL)**, a guided tour of the system, an open Q&A session and a microgreens aperitif.

The next day 6 May, the focus moved to leadership. In **"Responsible Leadership in Action: A Dialogue"** at ZHAW in Zurich, ZCSL Co-Head **Prof. Dr. Christian Vögtlin** began from a simple observation: even highly motivated professionals often pause at basic questions. What does responsibility really mean, why does it matter, and where should one start? A short input and the participants' own experiences shaped the workshop that followed.

In the same afternoon in Winterthur, **"Sustainability Reporting Beyond Compliance: Lessons from Industry"** asked how companies can use sustainability reporting to **set priorities, improve efficiency and build resilience**, rather than treating it as a compliance exercise. Regula K. Broger shared the panel with **Sabine Fankhauser (ESG Manager, Barry Callebaut)**, **Prof. Jürg Hosang (ZHAW School of Engineering)** and **Florian Roth (ZHAW ZCSL)**, with **myclimate** as partner.



The workshop on "Sustainability Reporting Beyond Compliance" took place in ZHAW SML in Winterthur.

One more event was co-organized by the ZHAW School of Management and Law, **Center for Corporate Performance and Sustainable Financing (CCPSF)**, **Prof. Beat Affolter** and the **Green Fintech Network (GFN)** on **"Options in Carbon Removal"** bringing together project developers,

financiers, and buyers of carbon removal to explore how to de-risk carbon removal. **Professor of Sustainable Finance Julia Meyer (ZHAW CCPSF)** took part in the panel discussion "**Swiss Pension Funds on the Path to Net Zero**" co-organized by Ethos and Nest Sammelstiftung.

All members of ZHAW SML were proud to take actively part as academic partners in the **important conversations** happening in sustainability right now in Switzerland. ZHAW SML members left energized, and with a clearer sense of **the role they want to play in what comes next**.

The participation strengthened the ZHAW SML's ties with business, policy and civil society in the Zurich region. Climate Week Zurich will return from **10 to 15 May 2027**, and the school looks forward to contributing again.

More information about the Climate Week 2026 events [can be found here](#).

World Biodiversity Forum Davos 2026

Bio-Value-at-Risk: A Scenario-based Concept to Assessing the Implications of Biodiversity Risks on Financial Portfolio Management using Geospatial Analysis

Authors: Jan-Alexander Posth¹, Peter Schwendner¹, Patrick Laube², Tomasz Orpiszewski¹

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- ²Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Institute of Natural Resource Sciences, School of Life Sciences and Facility Management

Biodiversity loss poses an increasingly material risk to companies and investors, yet its integration into corporate and financial risk management remains limited due to data scarcity, methodological fragmentation, and a lack of spatial precision. This paper introduces the **Bio-Value-at-Risk (BioVaR)** framework, a bottom-up, scenario-based approach that quantifies the financial implications of biodiversity loss at the level of individual corporate assets. By overlaying geospatial biodiversity indicators derived from high-resolution remote sensing data with asset-level operational information, the method attributes localized ecosystem impacts to specific company sites. These physical impacts are translated into site-specific financial loss estimates through empirically calibrated cost functions, which incorporate both physical and transition risks, including regulatory and reputational effects. Aggregating these local losses across a firm's operations allows the construction of biodiversity-conditioned financial statements and the estimation of valuation effects on equity and debt positions. When consistently applied across firms, these company-level valuations form the basis for portfolio-level risk measures such as BioVaR or biodiversity-related Expected Shortfall.

The framework generalizes established principles of operational risk management to nature-related risks and connects geospatial environmental data with financial valuation models and scenario analysis. It enables the derivation of probability distributions of biodiversity-related financial losses under globally consistent scenarios, including those conditioned on climate pathways or regional regulatory responses. Compared with prevailing top-down approaches, BioVaR provides higher spatial, temporal, and sectoral resolution, allowing investors, regulators, and policymakers to identify, price, and manage biodiversity risk exposures through targeted investment, lending, and credit decisions rather than sector-wide exclusions.

The study demonstrates that linking satellite-based biodiversity metrics with asset-level financial data enables consistent quantification, internalization, and aggregation of nature-related risks within corporate risk frameworks and portfolio management. The BioVaR concept thus advances the operationalization of spatial sustainable finance and offers a scalable, data-driven pathway toward integrating biodiversity considerations into financial risk analysis, disclosure, and strategic decision-making.

The study was presented at the [World Biodiversity Forum, Davos, Switzerland from 14-19 June 2026](#).



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