

Sustainability at GRS – Strategy for the years 2022 to 2025

For us, sustainability means that we do not think of our economic actions and work on the one hand and our environment and our society on the other separately but rather as a whole. We are therefore expressly committed to sustainable corporate governance as described in the German Government's sustainability strategy, in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations and in the philosophy of sustainable corporate action underlying the German Sustainability Code (DNK).

Applying this to the day-to-day work of GRS means that we do not only orient ourselves on economic figures but also include social and ecological aspects in our decisions. It also means that we, as a predominantly publicly financed research institution, are aware of our social responsibility as well as the requirements of the research funding bodies and act in a resource-conserving manner. We are convinced that we also benefit from this as a company – because only sustainable action guarantees sustainable success.

The following sections describe the goals we pursue and how we put our convictions into action, both strategically and operationally. Our staff, shareholders and cooperation partners play a central role in the implementation. After all, the best idea is useless without people who take it up and help shape it. Transparency, awareness-raising and participation, both internally and externally, are therefore crucial to achieving these sustainability goals. Our efforts for sustainable action are summarised in our biennial Sustainability Report. In addition, we publish an annual Corporate Governance Report in which we present our measures for sustainable corporate governance.

1. Our goal: climate neutrality by 2030

As an organisation whose essential purpose is to protect people and the environment, climate protection is of particular importance to us. **We are therefore committed to the Federal Government's goal of making the federal administration climate-neutral by 2030.** In order to achieve this goal, it applies to all our activities that CO₂ emissions are to be avoided as a matter of priority or, if this is not possible, are to be reduced as far as possible.

In addition to very specific measures that we have already taken or are striving to implement, we are working on being able to measure and evaluate GRS's carbon footprint as concretely as possible within the framework of our sustainability controlling. Since we, as a non-profit organisation financed almost entirely from public funds, are particularly committed to economic sustainability, we also want to discuss together with our shareholders and customers whether and, if so, how unavoidable greenhouse gas emissions can be compensated.

1.1 Modernising infrastructure, using renewable energies

In all renovations and modernisation measures, **we consistently pay attention to sustainability and especially to the exploitation of potentials for reducing energy and electricity consumption.** For example, the lighting of the offices and corridors have been successively converted to energy-efficient LEDs. The air-conditioning, especially that of the GRS data centre at the Garching offices, was made more energy-efficient by increasing the average room temperature. The buildings at all four GRS locations are heated with district heating.

Due to the increased number of employees working outside the GRS locations in the context of the Corona pandemic, electricity consumption at all locations has decreased considerably. In the future, too, the possibility of mobile working established within the framework of the company agreements will contribute to a significant reduction in electricity consumption. **Our goal is, in a first step, to reduce electricity consumption**

by at least 15 % by 2025 in the long term compared to the level before the Corona pandemic.

In order to better identify further control and savings potential, **we are developing a monitoring system for our energy consumption**; for various reasons, this cannot yet be reported uniformly for all locations or processes (partly due to flat-rate billing).

In addition, we currently determine the potential for using renewable energies (heat, electricity and cooling). At the Garching offices, where there is a heritable building right to the buildings, there are already concrete plans to **install photovoltaic modules with an output of 100 kW_p**. Various offers have already been received, and an order is to be placed shortly. Our goal is to cover up to 20 % of the total electricity demand at the Garching offices with our own electricity generated in this way.

1.2 Commuting climate-friendly

Our goal is to reduce commuting-related CO₂ emissions caused by the activities of GRS as far as possible.

This starts with **supporting our staff as far as possible in making their way to work climate-friendly**. Depending on the place of residence of the individual, the use of public transport as well as bicycles can be considered for this purpose thanks to the good transport connections of our locations. By means of a framework agreement with the Federal Office of Administration, GRS already offers its employees the possibility to purchase a job ticket. At all locations, possibilities to safely park bicycles and use showers have been created – partly by means of corresponding structural measures. In addition, we are examining how even more employees can be encouraged to use public transport or bicycles in the future (e.g. by GRS participating in initiatives such as the so-called “CITY CYCLING”). Finally, the recently introduced option of mobile working also contributes to reducing commuting distances and thus the related CO₂ emissions.

We also achieve a significant reduction in CO₂ emissions by organising business trips in a climate-conscious manner. Business trips are carried out in compliance with the requirements of the Federal Travel Expenses Act (BRKG). Sustainability aspects are already extensively taken into account in the existing corporate process “Travel Management”. Accordingly, business trips are to be carried out as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible. In concrete terms, this means, for example, that **business trips within Germany are principally to be carried out as far as possible with Deutsche Bahn**. Domestic flights can only be considered as an alternative if there are compelling reasons (especially on the part of the client) that make this necessary.

In order to give greater weight to the topic of mobility, the existing “Travel Management” process will be further developed into the “Mobility Management” process. In future, this process will take into account the topics of commuting, business trips and company cars/vehicle fleet. In the design and subsequent further development of this process, the **identification of further potential for emission savings** plays an important role, too. To this end, we will also discuss with the relevant stakeholders whether and, if so, how unavoidable CO₂ emissions, for example as a result of unavoidable air travel, can be compensated for, as far as legally and economically possible, by supporting related initiatives.

The topic of company cars/vehicle fleet plays a rather subordinate role for sustainability at GRS since GRS currently only owns four vehicles (one of which is a van for the staff of the geoscientific laboratory). Two of the four vehicles are hybrid electric vehicles used by the managing directors of GRS. The fourth vehicle is used for courier/shuttle services at the Garching location, but is now rarely used due to the Corona pandemic and a change in travel patterns.

1.3. Meeting climate-friendly

Not only since the Corona pandemic have we weighed up which arguments speak in favour of holding an event in virtual form, as a hybrid event or as a face-to-face event when planning GRS events. **We are guided in particular by the “*Guidelines on Sustainable Event Organisation*”,** published by the Federal Ministry for the Environment,

Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) and the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). Since the main environmental impact of events is usually caused by the participants' travel to and from the event, good public transport connections to the event location are the primary selection criterion. In this respect, the location of the GRS offices (especially in Cologne and Berlin) is also advantageous.

2. Retaining employees to secure competences in the long term

GRS provides the Federation and the public with knowledge and capabilities that are needed in the long term. In the field of nuclear safety and radiation protection, it is particularly important to **maintain and further develop the necessary competences in order to be able to ensure effective emergency protection in case of events in nuclear power plants close to borders** also after completion of the nuclear phase-out. Here, as stipulated in § 106(3) of the Radiation Protection Act (StrlSchG), GRS is responsible as part of the Federal Radiological Situation Centre for systems engineering assessments which, for example, form the basis for dispersion calculations of the Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS). These competences are also necessary to **effectively strive for the highest possible safety at an international level** – this applies to rule-making at the EU or IAEA level as well as to cross-border environmental impact assessments for new construction projects in neighbouring countries. In the fields of storage and disposal, there is still a need for research as well as for expert assessment and advice from independent and competent institutions.

Providing these competences in a sustainable manner while keeping pace with technical and scientific developments is associated with various challenges for GRS. The focus here is on initial and in-service training as well as – especially with regard to sustainable corporate action – the long-term retention of its employees.

Creating and maintaining competence as a sustainable investment

The importance of initial and in-service training has been continuously increasing for years since relevant university education has been cut back. Accordingly, GRS invests a lot of time and, in some cases, money in developing new colleagues into experts and thus into competence carriers. Furthermore, the demand to reflect the current state of the art in science and technology in research as well as in assessment and advice also requires continuous training. **In addition to targeted measures such as internal or external training, both of these demands make it absolutely necessary to work on corresponding projects.** This applies in particular to projects with international partners or for foreign customers from which knowledge about and insights into foreign facilities and current technical developments can be gained. In the interest of a sustainable maintenance of competence, GRS therefore also strives for the acquisition of or participation in such projects in the long term.

Another essential objective of sustainable competence and human resources management is to bind employees to GRS in the long term. On the one hand, this serves to maintain the competence of these experts. On the other hand, the considerable effort involved in the (further)development of experts constitutes a significant investment from a business perspective. For us, sustainable management in this context means preserving the value of these investments.

Conveying a sense of purpose, appreciation and perspective

In addition to good pay and modern working conditions (see 3 below), two factors are crucial for the long-term retention of employees: the perception of meaningfulness and appreciation of one's own work and – especially with such a high degree of specialisation and low demand on the general labour market – a secure career perspective.

Conveying a sense of purpose and appreciation is above all the responsibility of all GRS staff in leading positions. Promoting and maintaining an appropriate management and communication culture is part of sustainable human resources management. This

also includes working together with relevant stakeholders – i.e. in particular our customers and shareholders – to ensure that employees are treated in an appreciative manner and, in particular, that the social value of their professional commitment is clearly communicated to the public.

A clear career perspective is essential, especially for the retention of younger employees. Even if a sense of purpose and appreciation are given, a future at GRS that is perceived as uncertain almost inevitably leads to those who are supposed to form the future foundation of GRS's competence turning to other sectors. This can already be observed in some areas. In order to counteract this development and to ensure the long-term availability of competent employees, two measures are suitable and necessary from GRS's point of view:

On the one hand, we advocate that the funding of GRS activities for the Federation be changed from the awarding of a large number of individual projects to **institutional funding** – as is the rule for organisations working in the general interest and with public funding. This would not only give the staff a secure perspective and would be perceived as proof of long-term meaningfulness. It would also result in a more efficient and thus more sustainable use of federal funds by eliminating the time-consuming and cost-intensive project administration both on the part of GRS and on the part of the Federation.

On the other hand, we are striving for the **establishment of a consumption foundation into which the so far unused reserves of GRS will flow.** The purpose of this foundation shall be to promote non-profit research projects in the field of nuclear safety both at GRS and at other institutions (see also 6 below). Such project funding, which is cost-neutral for the Federation, would be an essential contribution to sustainable corporate action, both with regard to the creation of secure professional perspectives and with regard to a sensible use of the aforementioned reserves oriented towards the common good.

3 Making work fair, family-friendly and healthy

An essential aspect of sustainable corporate governance is to create working conditions and a corporate-cultural environment in which employees can motivate themselves because they feel they are treated fairly and are respected and valued as human beings with individual strengths, weaknesses and needs.

3.1 Promoting equality and diversity

An essential prerequisite for this is the **creation of equal opportunities with regard to gender (gender equality) as well as origin, age, religious or ideological confession or sexual orientation (diversity)**. We are convinced that this applies all the more to GRS because research organisations in today's world have to be part of a global research community to enable the necessary exchange and gain of knowledge. This will only succeed in the long term if these values are lived both within the organisation and in dealings with people from other organisations, such as foreign research partners and customers. The cultural openness and international diversity of GRS is also reflected in the fact that we employ **people from almost 40 countries**.

In accordance with the above, the equal participation of women and men and the non-discriminatory dealings with each other are formulated as goals in our *Principle(s) for Leadership and Cooperation*. **Gender-equitable remuneration** for comparable work has always been ensured by being party to the collective bargaining system of the technical inspection organisations (TÜV).

Currently, the share of female employees at GRS is 39 % (159 of 409). Among scientific employees, this share is 26 % (82 of 310), among staff in leading positions 25 % (8 of 32, including staff unit positions). We are striving to **increase the percentages by 2025**, in particular the latter two, insofar as this is possible under labour law and in view of the interest of suitable female applicants. **In the longer term, we are aiming for parity here.**

In order to promote this development, we want to work in dialogue with staff and works councils to identify relevant factors and fields of action and, if necessary, improve them where possible. Such factors include, for example, the compatibility of work and childcare or the care for relatives (see 3.2 below) – which still disproportionately affects women – or targeted recruiting.

3.2 Creating space for childcare and care for relatives

The compatibility of family and work is not only one of several factors that have an impact on gender- and age-related equal opportunities. It is a prerequisite for people caring for children or for relatives to be able to remain professionally engaged in the long term without their physical or mental health or their satisfaction with their own occupation being adversely affected. Creating the appropriate framework conditions is not only an expression of appreciation and care on the part of the employer, but also indispensable in order to acquire highly qualified staff as an attractive employer and retain them in the long term.

We already **support staff raising children and carers among our staff in many ways**: through flexible working hours and flexitime models, through further options for mobile working, through subsidising day care slots and nationwide emergency short-term childcare with cost coverage by GRS and through parent-child rooms at our locations in Brunswick, Garching and Cologne. Here, too, we work together with those affected, management staff and works councils to develop further improvements and, where necessary, individual solutions within the framework of what is legally and economically possible.

3.3 Maintaining and promoting health

Occupational health management is already an **integral part of our occupational health and safety processes**. In addition to the required, legally prescribed preventive measures, preventive health services and medical check-ups, it also includes health days, framework agreements with service providers, company sports and much more. Through our reintegration management, we support employees affected by longer or

more serious illnesses in dialogue with the works council and, if necessary, with the support of the occupational health service provider of GRS, in shaping their way back into professional activity according to their individual needs.

Staff statistics on incapacity to work (sick leave) and other absences are analysed and evaluated without looking at personal data or individual case-related data. Our **goal is to always achieve significantly better values for the corresponding key figures than are shown in the annual health reports of the health insurance funds for the insured persons there.**

In this respect, the role and importance of good leadership is not underestimated. Accordingly, we also sensitise and train our staff in leading positions. Particularly due to the pandemic, the topic of “Distance Leadership” and internal communication in mobile working have become considerably more important. In order to ensure the exchange of information – also in the context of mobile working – the management and the division heads have agreed on binding regulations for communication.

4. Promoting education

As a non-profit research organisation, we see it as our responsibility to **contribute to the promotion of education and the transfer of knowledge from our fields of work** in the sense of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal “Quality Education”. Therefore, our social commitment also includes supporting school and university education programmes through the participation of GRS experts.

Furthermore, we want to support school education in the future also by increasingly giving computer hardware that has been depreciated for tax purposes and taken out of service for technical reasons to non-profit initiatives that can refurbish this hardware on an honorary basis and distribute it to socially disadvantaged pupils. This is intended to make a small contribution to more equal opportunities in digital education and to conserve resources by extending the useful life of this equipment.

In order to **communicate knowledge to a broader public**, we take various approaches. On the one hand, it is part of our self-image to be available to media professionals, especially from the field of science journalism, as a well-founded and neutral source of valid information on all questions relating to nuclear safety and radiation protection. On the other hand, we use our web presence, social media and video formats to report transparently on our work and to offer generally understandable specialist knowledge.

5. Procuring environmentally friendly and fair

The criterion of sustainability is firmly anchored in our procurement process in the generally central procurement of materials, products and services and is applied accordingly. With regard to products, attention is paid, for example, to renowned environmental labels (such as the “Blue Angel”), social seals or independent certifications. Should the product or service to be procured not have a renowned label/award for compliance with ecological and social aspects, the fulfilment of the criteria should be researched elsewhere if possible. **Ecological and social aspects are to be taken into account appropriately in addition to compliance with the principle of economic efficiency.** We require our service providers to provide appropriate evidence.

Computer hardware and the necessary operating and user software form the core area of digitalisation. Therefore, when procuring our computer hardware, we rely on high-quality business products from manufacturers that guarantee the longest possible life and support (usually 5 years). Available environmental information for these product categories (such as the criteria of the *Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT)*)¹ is taken into account in our procurement process when selecting suppliers and products. This includes manufacturing processes and energy consumption during operation as well as recyclability.

¹ See the publication “*Environmental Information for Products and Services: Requirements – Tools – Examples*”, 7th revised edition, status September 2019 (available at <https://www.blauer-engel.de/sites/default/files/2021-08/environmental-information-products-services-en.pdf>).

6. Social funding

With the establishment of a consumption foundation, we want to make a part of the so far largely unused reserves of GRS available to **promote non-profit research projects of other researchers or institutions on issues relating to nuclear safety**. This should not be connected with a return service to GRS. In this way, we want to make a contribution to the long-term maintenance of relevant competences beyond our own work and the initial and in-service training of our experts.

7. Social volunteering

As a non-profit organisation, we not only want to promote sustainability through our work and activities outside of technical projects, but also **support our staff in their private commitment to sustainability-related goals**. We are aware that as an almost entirely publicly financed company, we have a particular responsibility towards our customers, shareholders and the public with regard to economic actions. Therefore, we are striving to develop a model for such support in agreement with the relevant stakeholders, which goes beyond the already existing flexible organisation of working hours (e.g. in the form of an additional day of holiday per year for participation in initiatives in the areas of environmental protection or school or university education).

8. Further developing sustainability controlling

Sustainability aspects are already anchored at various points in our integrated management system (IMS), which is certified in accordance with the quality management standard DIN EN ISO 9001:2015 and the information security standard ISO/IEC 27001:2013. Compliance with these standards is mandatory. Nevertheless, these aspects are to be gradually deepened and our sustainability goals more strongly emphasised. This is done through our mission statement, our principles for leadership and cooperation as well as the processes and principles of action. Furthermore, we will create more transparency through **increased sustainability controlling using appropriate indicators** (figures, data, facts).

Our employees will find these indicators centrally provided in the form of an internal dashboard from the second half of 2022. We will continue to provide this information to our other stakeholders through our sustainability and corporate governance reports. We raise awareness among our employees through these transparency masks and appropriate training on sustainability issues. **In this regard, we work intensively with the works councils.** Especially within the framework of the company suggestion scheme, employees have the opportunity to actively participate and make contributions. A corresponding collective company agreement was concluded at the beginning of 2022. A new electronic platform is currently being tested for the practical implementation of the company suggestion scheme.

By mid-2023, we will **evaluate the cost-benefit ratio of certifying our IMS in accordance with standards for an environmental management system (EMS).** The prerequisites for implementing an EMS based on the existing IMS are given at GRS. In the case of a DIN EN ISO 14001 certification, synergy effects with the existing certifications could be used. Compared to this, the effort required to implement the requirements of the Eco Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is currently estimated to be considerably higher.