



COMMUNIQUÉ
LIFE SCIENCES UNIVERSITIES ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND
ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE BIOECONOMIES

Forty years ago scientists alerted the world to the threat of global heating and climate change, and that climate change was real and already happening. However, society has been too slow to engage and respond to this threat to humanity.

The latest IPCC Assessment Reports from 2014, 2018 and 2021 confirmed that human beings are facing unprecedented threat to their life on Earth from global heating caused by the burning of fossil fuels and by systems of land use. The concentrations and levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere have escalated by more than a third since the Industrial Revolution, trapping heat energy in the atmosphere with consequent global temperature rise.

Agriculture and food systems have contributed and are still contributing to climate change by a third of the global greenhouse gases emitted by human activity. Thus, actions taken in this next decade, by 2030, will decide the degree to which global mean temperature will rise by 2050, The current rise is already strongly affecting our weather systems, and thus impacting food, water supplies and biodiversity.

Climate change must now be addressed with the same urgency and commitment that the COVID-19 pandemic was addressed. The needed overall response is a society-wide transition of the current fossil fuel-based economy to a green, circular economy, of which the sustainable bioeconomy forms a central part.

European life sciences universities are committed to this transition to a sustainable and circular economy; we will reach out to sectors in government and society to drastically cut emissions quickly, and design and implement sustainable practices, sectors and institutions.

Thus, we the Rectors, Deans and Senior Management of the Association for European Life Science Universities at our Forum focusing on the ***Role of Life Science Universities in Transitioning to Climate Neutrality*** held in Leuven, Belgium on 21 and 22 October 2021;

Recognising that university education, research and innovation are a vital pillar for transitioning to a sustainable bioeconomy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions;

Placing climate change and climate neutrality at the centre of our learning, research, our collaboration with societal partners, and in our campus operations;

Pledge to leaders at COP26:

1. We will enhance our understanding of climate change and transition pathways in our curricula and provide our students – the future professionals and decision makers - with

all available understanding of the need, means and paths for society to move to climate neutrality,

2. We will enhance our research into understanding of and integral solutions for climate neutrality, designing concrete pathways towards sustainable bioeconomies,
3. We will seek active collaboration with the agrifood, biobased, marine, forestry and other economic and societal actors and sectors in our locations across Europe to help implement concrete products, technologies, activities and practices that severely reduce climate change impacts and advance net-zero greenhouse gas emissions systems, and
4. We will engage with our life science institutions and campuses in moving towards climate neutrality so that they become beacons of progress and exemplary for other research and teaching institutions.

Signed by

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The **Association for European Life Science Universities (ICA)** has a membership of more than 50 European universities or faculties from more than 29 European countries, whose primary interests are in the areas of agriculture, forestry, climate change, food production and consumption, the bio-based sector, natural resources, biodiversity, the protection of the environment, and rural development. ICA and its members aim to jointly play an essential role in transitioning to a European and global sustainable bioeconomy and society. (see www.ica-europe.info)

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