
Waste and the Circular Economy

Prevention, reduction and recycling

A growing global population and increasing economic production correlate with a sharp increase in waste. In many countries of the Global North, economic growth has gone hand in hand with rising living standards, and the downside of poor waste management has so far been felt mainly in developing countries, the so-called Global South. The environmental footprint of high-income countries is thus up to ten times larger than that of low-income countries.

However, the impacts of unsustainable production are beginning to be felt globally, and waste producers must take responsibility for the impact of their management on the environment and on people's social and health conditions.

The Czech Republic has dropped eight places in the Global Waste Index, which analyses the efficiency of waste management, between 2019 and 2022 and currently ranks 20th out of the 38 countries analysed. **We recycle only 22% of the waste we produce.**

The principles that guide Charles University on its path to sustainable waste management are **prevention, reduction, recycling and re-use** of waste or materials, and compliance with the **circular economy**.

Since the publication of the CU Sustainable Development Strategy, several effective measures have been implemented at the university. The **mapping of biodegradable waste streams in the environment of dormitories and canteens** has been the basis. The results will be used to evaluate further action, such as the addition of biodegradable waste sorting bins or the installation of composters.

As part of waste prevention, the university has advocated the use of backed-up returnable packaging in the canteen environment, gradually replacing disposable cups and polystyrene boxes. An interactive way to prevent waste and give old items a second life are the HYB4 Circular Workshops at Campus Hybernská.

Bags for **waste separation were provided for students** in CU dormitories, motivating them and making the separation process easier. The educational activities of both local and international students continue hand in hand. The university buildings also have **separated waste bins**. Thus, all students and staff are encouraged to be conscientious about waste separation in the daily operations of the university.

Several re-use centres have already been set up in the student government, where students can bring unwanted but functional items and in turn take items that they need. In cooperation with the Rector's Office, the university created the Gratis Market, which is located at Campus Hybernská and is open to visitors every workday. It operates according to the principle: **take what you need, give what you don't need**.