

# University Toolkit for a Climate Friendly Travel Policy

*This toolkit, written by ExPlane, is meant for students and staff at universities who want to establish an academic culture without the need for frequent flights.*

Air travel is one of the largest sources of carbon emissions of universities. Do you want to reduce your university's emissions by addressing air travel? This campaign toolkit can help you raise awareness on the climate impact of flying and to change your university's travel policy. Here are some guidelines to get started!

## 1

### FIND THE RIGHT INFORMATION

It is important to know the facts to build a convincing case for your campaign. Can you find out the carbon footprint of your university? What share does travelling have in the overall footprint of your university? What does your university's current travel policy look like?

Use a **carbon calculator** (e.g.: <https://bit.ly/2GRX9sD>) to compare different modes of transport: this will help you make clear how easily CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions can be saved by choosing trains and buses over planes or by simply choosing not to travel.

**Have a look at articles** that explain clearly why and how air travel in academia should be reduced, as well as other resources that help you to build your case here: [www.timetoexplain.com/index.php/explane-toolkit/](http://www.timetoexplain.com/index.php/explane-toolkit/)

Are you still looking for a bachelor's or **master's thesis** topic? You might be able to connect your research to an ExPlane campaign and contribute to the network's mission. Contact us if you want help turning your ideas into a specific research topic: [info@timetoexplain.com](mailto:info@timetoexplain.com)

## 2

### HOW TO START A GROUP

Starting a group is an important first step to spread an idea or initiative. But it might entail getting out of your comfort zone: you will probably approach new people in order to develop an initial network of people willing to collaborate with you.

#### 1. Find out what's already there

Get an overview of the groups or organisations that already work on similar topics at your university and get in touch with them. This will prevent you from doing the same work twice and may offer possibilities for collaboration. It's better to work together and join forces than to start from zero! It also makes sense to connect to groups that formed at other universities to learn from them and possibly collaborate with them (see some good practices here: <http://bitly.ws/aHAU>). You could also reach out to the local chapter of, for example, Fridays for Future, or other climate justice groups to find support.

#### 2. Reach out to your network

In order to find people who also want to change your university's travel policy, start talking about it with your surroundings. By putting up posters, handing out flyers, spreading your message through a mailing list, using social media platforms or organising an information evening, you can reach people outside of your network. The best way to inspire others is to share what inspired you to take action. Getting your student media to cover your campaign (idea) is a good opportunity to let the wider student body know what you're planning on doing. You can write an article or essay for your campus or local newspaper.

#### 3. Don't forget university staff

Teachers, professors or other university staff will be a valuable addition to your campaign group. They can help you interact with your university's administration, recruit new members among the staff and offer valuable insights. Professors and teachers who teach sustainability-related courses are a good first start.

#### 4. Get to know each other

Pick a date, reserve a room, and start promoting! This first meeting is an opportunity to tell as many people as possible why you care about sustainable travelling and how the ExPlane campaign contributes to achieving a more just and sustainable world (also see: 'How to organise a dialogue night'). This is a good moment for people to ask questions and express their ideas. But it is also an opportunity to get to know each other. Bring snacks and take your time. It will make meetings much more fun!

### 3

## HOW TO KEEP A GROUP RUNNING

### 1. **Create a group structure and find a schedule that works**

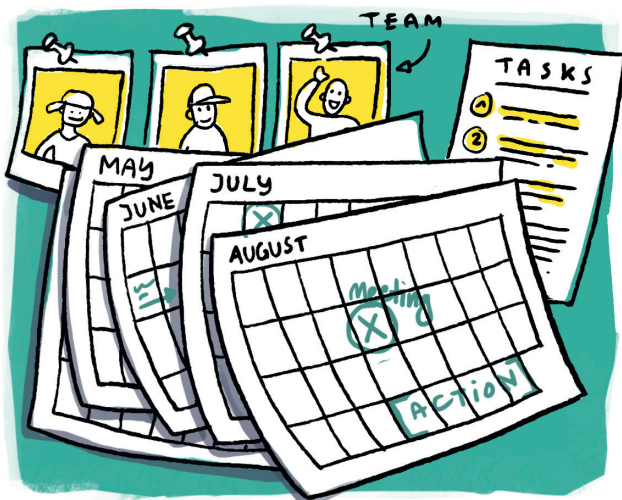
Make sure to have a clear overview of who is responsible for what, so members know who to reach out to for questions, ideas and concerns. Decide together which platform you will use to work on and collect all your data; Slack or Google Drive could be useful. It is also important to create a space for other people to develop leadership qualities. This way the ExPlane campaign can keep influencing your university also after you graduate and leave the campaign. Even if you are with only 2 or 3 people you are ready to start. Remember that you're working with a group of volunteers: not everyone has the same amount of time to spend on the campaign. Be honest, understanding and realistic about this.

### 2. **Plan your year**

...in order to develop a common understanding of the group's vision for sustainable travelling practices for university members. Mapping out your year and setting specific goals and deadlines can help you to make a vision a reality. But before making concrete plans, be sure to formulate a clear overall goal or impact. This will make it easier for you to come up with achievements and results along the way.

### 3. **Recognition & collaboration**

If the ExPlane group gets recognised by your university (and its associations), you might be able to co-organise events and grow your network more easily. Reach out to study associations and sustainability platforms at your university, and ask them if they are willing to collaborate with you on the ExPlane campaign. Your university may have a Green Office, which you can approach with your ideas.



### 4

## HOW TO ORGANISE A DIALOGUE NIGHT

A dialogue night is a perfect occasion to inform people about the climate impact of flying and to discuss whether and when travelling is necessary. The night can also be used to draft a proposal with a larger group to send to your administration. Don't forget to invite the staff!

Here are some ideas of topics you can cover during a dialogue night:

**Get the facts straight.** Why do we have to change our travel behaviour? Why should universities be part of this change? You can add specific travel information of your university if that is available: how much CO<sub>2</sub> does your university emit and how much does air travel contribute to this?

**Allow people to position themselves.** How much have they travelled by plane? Are they willing to change this if this can reduce their carbon footprint?

**Present some statements to trigger a debate.** Here are some examples:

- In times of climate crisis, a university should be taking measures to limit the number of flights.
- The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions do not weigh up to the benefits of air travel for education.
- It's not worth taking a flight to present your research.
- Flying is not a right.
- Videoconferences can replace all flights.
- One can limit the number of flights without harming research and ambitions of our university.

**Film screening:** This can also be a good way to increase awareness and trigger a debate. We can recommend these documentaries on YouTube:

- Can flying go green?
- The true cost of flying
- Is it wrong to fly?
- How the travel industry affects our lives

Share good practices: are there examples of travel policies of universities that have worked? See some examples here: <http://bitly.ws/aHAU>

**Write a proposal:** moving on from the discussion, you can use the last part of the night to come up with a specific proposal you can send to your university administration. This proposal for Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona could be a useful source of inspiration to start making your own: <http://bitly.ws/aHAS>

This PowerPoint could be the basis of your presentation: <https://bit.ly/2STVXav>

## 5

### FIND OUT HOW YOUR UNIVERSITY WORKS

Once you have a group of enthusiastic people together to work on the campaign, it might help you to answer the following questions:

#### Who are the ones making decisions and who have power?

You can make a power map to begin with. Examples of key players are:

- the board of directors
- students teachers
- sustainability department
- corporate responsibility department
- financial management
- other student groups

#### How is the power in the university structured and who are the core of the organisation?

#### How can these people be influenced?

In the following step, you will find some inspiration for creative actions.

#### Who can be approached for dialogue and how can they be reached?



## 6

### GET ACTIVE: IDEAS FOR CREATIVE ACTIONS

Here are some ideas to gain attention for your campaign. Never forget to take pictures of your actions! This will help you to spread your message further on social media. You can always let us know when you are planning an action or when the university board is taking an important decision. We can help you support the campaign

#### DRESS UP

With a small group of people (one pilot, two stewards and one tourist taking pictures) and 3-4 hours of preparation, you can already have a big impact! At a tax conference in the Netherlands, activists dressed up as pilots and stewardesses and asked the participants to 'check-in for sustainable travel'. The goal of their action was to support the Dutch state-secretary in his push for a tax on kerosene. People responded very positively to the action, the state secretary himself came out to support it and the action appeared in the national news.

#### Needed?

- A pilot & steward outfit: use any type of a formal suit, preferably in blue or black. Create your own steward hat and add an airplane on it. If you want to target a specific airline you can copy their logo.
- Signs: use old cardboard to create your own signs.
- Find a conference or event at your university for your action: an action like this works best if you do it as a response to a bigger event.

#### SPREAD YOUR MESSAGE

#### Needed?

- Large white papers
- Black markers
- A good message
- Tape
- Enough windows in a prominent building

A banner drop is also a good option. You can make a banner with some paint and/or markers and an old sheet. Drop it from a visible place on campus. You can also use helium balloons to float it to the ceiling indoors to attract extra attention!

#### START A PETITION

After you have attracted attention with your actions, launching a petition gives more people the opportunity to support you. This also helps you as you can show the university that the campaign is supported by a large crowd. Once people start sharing the petition, it will also raise more awareness on the topic. A good website to work with is [actionnetwork.org](http://actionnetwork.org).



## OCCUPY A CENTRAL PLACE

Another useful way to get attention for your campaign is to organize a sit-in: occupy or block a central place in the university or school. Make sure to inform people why you are organising this sit-in. For this action to succeed, it is important that they sympathise with you: you want to enlarge your support base.

You can combine the action with a teach-in: hold a lecture to inform people about the impact of aviation in academia and why you started the campaign.

## NO SUCCESS?

Don't worry and don't give up. If your demands are not met, you should keep up the pressure. By continuing to push, it becomes more likely your university or school will listen to you and take your demands seriously.

Come together with the campaign group and set new goals. With the campaign you probably reached a lot of new people. Try to make the group bigger and think of new creative actions that can attract even more attention. Don't forget to hold meetings throughout the preparation of the action in order to increase your support base.

## 7

## CONCRETE STEPS YOU CAN DEMAND YOUR UNIVERSITY TO TAKE

### Pledge!

The university can pledge to adopt travel policies that are really climate-friendly and become part of the growing community of organisations that reduce business travel by plane and foster climate-friendly travel alternatives.

### Specify the measures and set deadlines

Every university is different and will have to find its own way to reduce air travel. There are different options available, and not all are applicable in every context. Some of the measures could be:

- Alternatives to flying are always considered first. Short-haul flights of staff are only reimbursed in exceptional circumstances when there is no point-to-point travel alternative that reaches the final destination within 8 hours.
- Everyone should always be able to choose sustainable travel options or opt-out of air travel when they view it as unnecessary.
- A fund is opened to enable students and staff to choose sustainable options over flying.
- Staff travel is avoided where it can be replaced by technology.
- Permission needs to be granted for long-haul travel, weighing off purpose, strategic value for the university, ethics, financial and environmental costs.
- Travel behaviour is registered and monitored.
- The university only reimburses long-haul flights with stop-over(s) when there is no direct alternative available.
- Travel is not only reduced, but the value of trips is also amplified.
- The university's travel agency uses responsible booking websites, such as [www.bookdifferent.com/en/](http://www.bookdifferent.com/en/).
- The university can fill in this Stay Grounded survey: <http://bitly.ws/aHAs>. It provides a list of concrete measures a university or school could implement, including optional deadlines.

### Inform

The university could use its communication channels to explain why it is changing its travel policy. This can inspire individuals to consider their own travel behaviour and other universities to change their policy too.



## 8

### SMALL VICTORIES

#### **A committed group to work on ExPlane**

Change starts with a small group of committed citizens: try to find a structure that works for everyone, such as set days on which you can meet, a clear division of tasks, and an adequate way to communicate.

#### **(Regular) meetings with the administration**

If you manage to set up a meeting with the administration, this means they take your concerns seriously. Your demands will not only stir a discussion within the administration, but it also allows you to find allies within the university administration who can give you advice and point out potential difficulties or obstacles. You can also use the meeting to warn them that they can expect action if they do not act fast enough.

#### **Other allies within the institution**

The more people who endorse your campaign, the more effective it will be. Is there a Green Office or a student committee on sustainability? Are there teachers who are passionate about the topic? Students with cool local/sustainable travel stories? Try to connect with them and get them on board or to endorse your project.

#### **Media attention**

The media has the power to change norms and allows universities to stand in the spotlight if they are committed to progressive changes that take the climate crisis seriously. The media can also be useful in case the university does not want to collaborate: if the media covers your action/petition/plea, you pressure your institution to take more actions, as the administration will try to prevent to receive further negative media attention. No need to immediately reach national newspapers, starting with your university press can already stir a debate.

#### **Changing individual behaviour of students and staff**

This might be hard to measure, but your actions, dialogue nights and posters will not only be useful in engendering policy changes, but they will also increase awareness on the climate impact of flying. They will lead to discussions, talks and reflections among students and staff. Your campaign will surely encourage individuals to consider sustainable travel options and inspire others to do the same.

#### **Don't forget to celebrate**

Organise a party to celebrate all the steps you have taken and the change you have made together with the team. Even small victories deserve a celebration. This will make it a lot more fun to work on the campaign and to keep on pushing.

## 9

### GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions, if you need advice or financial support for your ExPlane campaign, don't hesitate and get in touch with us! If you have other ideas that you think should be in this toolkit, please email it to us. You can reach us on [info@timetoexplain.com](mailto:info@timetoexplain.com).



Guide written by ExPlane  
published in collaboration with Stay Grounded  
Layout: Alexander Neubauer

#### **EXPLANE**

[www.timetoexplain.com](http://www.timetoexplain.com)  
[info@timetoexplain.com](mailto:info@timetoexplain.com)

**ExPlane**  
YOUR UNIVERSITY

#### **STAY GROUNDED**

c/o Kollektiv Periskop  
Neustiftgasse 36  
1070 Wien, Austria  
[www.stay-grounded.org](http://www.stay-grounded.org)  
[info@stay-grounded.org](mailto:info@stay-grounded.org)

**STAY  
GROUNDED**



For donations please visit: [stay-grounded.org/donation](http://stay-grounded.org/donation)