



AALBORG
UNIVERSITY



THE GLOBAL GOALS
For Sustainable Development

Sustainability report 2024-2025

Aalborg University Sustainability Report

The 17 interconnected Sustainable Development Goals provide a framework for addressing the world’s most pressing and complex challenges. Tackling these issues requires coordinated action across all sectors of society. Knowledge institutions such as Aalborg University play a pivotal role in this endeavor, as both research and education generate impact that extends far beyond the university itself.

[Aalborg University](#) (AAU) was established in 1974 to address regional needs for education, growth, and employment. From the very beginning, external collaboration and problem-based learning (PBL) have been central to AAU’s identity. These principles continue to define the university today, where AAU is recognized nationally as a partner for businesses, and internationally the [problem-based learning approach](#) is known as The Aalborg Model.

[Looking ahead to 2026](#), AAU’s vision is to be internationally acknowledged as a mission-oriented university contributing to sustainable development. This sustainability report highlights examples of how AAU supports each of the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) through diverse initiatives.

The **Aalborg University Sustainability Report 2024-2025** is the outcome of an inclusive, collaborative process across the institution. It showcases sustainability efforts in research, teaching, engagement, and operations, reflecting AAU’s strong commitment to sustainability across all areas. This report is not an exhaustive overview of all sustainability-related work conducted by or in collaboration with AAU, but presents selected cases of sustainability activities.

Acknowledgements

The editors would like to thank all the contributors to this report without whom this report would not have been possible. We acknowledge that without our fellow researchers, administrative staff, students and communication colleagues, we would not have been able to identify so many great contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Special thanks should also go to Birte Hornemann, Senior Consultant, Aalborg University Library, and Bo Jeppesen, Chief Strategic Advisor, Rector's Office, for close collaboration and engagement in the process.

Editors

Alberte Rørbæk Kokholm Sørensen
Research Assistant, Department of Sustainability & Planning

Henrik Riisgaard
Teach. Assoc. Prof, Department of Sustainability & Planning

Martin Lehmann
Assoc. Prof., Department of Sustainability & Planning

Layout

Martin Lehmann
Assoc. Prof., Department of Sustainability & Planning

Times Higher Education Impact Rank overall - Aalborg University



Content

- 05 FOREWORD**
- 06 SUSTAINABILITY AT AAU AT A GLANCE**
- 07 AAU AT A GLANCE**
- 08 SUSTAINABILITY AT AAU**
- 10 A SAFE AND JUST WORLD**
- 12 SDG GOALS**
- 12 No poverty
- 14 Zero hunger
- 16 Good health and well-being
- 18 Quality education
- 20 Gender equality
- 22 Clean water and sanitation
- 24 Affordable and clean energy
- 26 Decent work and economic growth
- 28 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 30 Reduced inequalities
- 32 Sustainable cities and communities
- 34 Responsible consumption and production
- 36 Climate action
- 38 Life below water
- 40 Life on land
- 42 Peace, justice and strong institutions
- 44 Partnerships for the goals
- 46 ABOUT THIS REPORT**



FOREWORD

From knowledge to action through a mission-based approach

At Aalborg University (AAU), we engage critically and constructively and take responsibility for our shared future by transforming complex challenges into sustainable change.

Our commitment to sustainability is deeply rooted in our mission-oriented approach, which guides our research, education, and engagement with society. The challenges we face – climate change, social inequality, and the well-being of future generations – are complex and interconnected. Addressing these “wicked problems” requires collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and borders.

In line with our strategy “[Knowledge for the World 2022-2026](#),” AAU has set a clear vision: to be internationally recognized as a mission-oriented university that contributes to sustainable development. In 2023, we took a significant step forward by adopting our first two missions: improved well-being of children and young people in Denmark, and a sustainable Danish energy system. These missions reflect our strategic ambition to create knowledge that benefits society locally, nationally, and globally. In 2024, we expanded our mission portfolio with a third mission: Improving Health Through Coherence and Individualization, further strengthening our commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2025, we continue to build on these missions, reinforcing our role as a mission-oriented university.

AAU’s mission-oriented approach is action-driven and inclusive. We work closely with researchers, students, businesses, public authorities, and civil society to co-create solutions that address urgent societal needs. This report presents a selection of cases that illustrate how AAU con-

tributes to all 17 SDGs through research, education, knowledge collaboration, and operations. From pioneering research in green energy systems and circular economy, to innovative educational models and strong partnerships for social inclusion, AAU demonstrates a broad and deep commitment to sustainability.

Sustainability is not a destination, but a continuous journey. As we move forward, our three missions will serve as guiding stars, ensuring that AAU remains at the forefront of creating knowledge for a safe, just, and sustainable world. I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this report and to our ongoing sustainability efforts. Together, we can make a difference for current and future generations.



Per Michael Johansen
Rector, Aalborg University

Sustainability at AAU at a Glance



AAU is a **mission-oriented university**
With two missions adopted to support SDG 3 and SDG 7



No. 1 university in the world on SDG 4 in 2024 (out of 1681 institutions)



In 2024 AAU ranked in the **World Top 5** on sustainability in the THE Impact Rankings



AAU is the **best engineering university** in Europe



More than **51,000** green student meals in 2022-2023 at AAU



AAU developed its first **Climate Plan** in 2023



No. 3 university in the world on SDG 14 in 2024 (out of 628 institutions)



8/10 leading scientists in Electronics and Electrical Engineering in Denmark came from AAU in 2023



No. 4 university in the world on SDG 10 in 2024 (out of 1108 institutions)



51% reduction in water consumption per user in 2022 compared to 2006



50% of external members in AAU's board must be female



In 2022 AAU launched **8500 m²** Innovation HUB



90% of companies experience that collaboration with AAU leads to innovation



31% of AAU management must be female



75,000 m² of wild nature at AAU



98 cold water fountains across AAU

AAU at a Glance

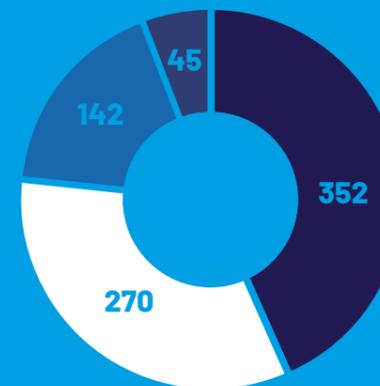
Education

17.692 Students (total)	2.783 International students	765 PhD students
67 Bachelor programmes	94 Master programmes	

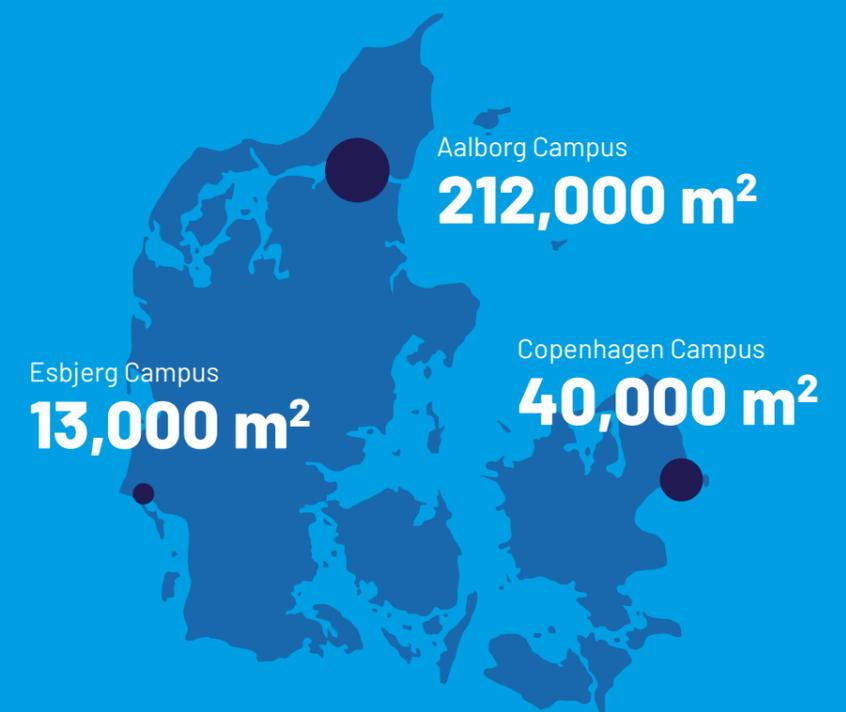
Who are we?

3.037 Research staff	2.189 Administrative staff	4 Faculties
--------------------------------	--------------------------------------	-----------------------

Grants



Where?



- Danish public
- Danish private
- EU
- International

Sustainability at Aalborg university

At Aalborg University, we believe that knowledge can and must change the world. To that end, Aalborg University is a university with high ambitions. We seek knowledge through interaction with the world around us and are dedicated to solving real problems.

Aalborg University is a [leading university](#) in terms of supporting and promoting balanced and sustainable development, which according to the UN is [development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs](#).

Aalborg University contributes to sustainable development through our core activities in research, learning and teaching, external leadership, and governance and operations.



Research

With Aalborg University's problem-based approach, researchers are committed to solving challenges and gaining new insights across traditional disciplines with the common goal of creating a better world. At our [four faculties](#), we address major societal challenges and aim to deliver applicable knowledge for the world through excellent research. Researchers across the university are working to help achieve sustainable development on a local, national and international level. We work to provide the necessary knowledge, technologies, innovations and pathways to enable implementation and achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

At Aalborg University, researchers work across disciplines and sectors to ensure that our research creates knowledge for the world. We engage in partnerships with businesses and public sector authorities to be able to deliver valuable knowledge as an important contribution to developing sustainable solutions to societal challenges.



Learning and teaching

The [PBL-based pedagogical model](#) of Aalborg University has become both nationally and internationally recognized by universities, researchers and students as an advanced, efficient learning model. Our goal is to drive change by educating graduates for the labour market of the future who ready on day one to solve future challenges. We work to continuously to ensure that our programme offerings meet the needs of surrounding communities and the future labour market.

All students at Aalborg University learn to collaborate, and to apply a critical, analytical, problem-oriented, and innovative approach, which will help them make their knowledge available to society. We educate graduates in a wide range of fields, and our engineering and science programmes are internationally recognized and are commonly [ranked among the very best](#).



External leadership and engagement

The journey towards a sustainable future necessitates a strong foundation of transformative knowledge, coupled with close partnerships with relevant stakeholders. Aalborg University's tradition of [strong collaborative relationships](#) with businesses, universities, civil society, and public sector authorities is thus one of the cornerstones of the university's contribution to the sustainable development of society. Collaboration with external stakeholders helps to ensure that both research and educational activities are relevant and contribute to the advancement of society.



Governance and operations

Aalborg University strives to [integrate sustainability in all activities](#), and we work strategically to reduce our negative environmental impact and create positive impacts instead. We work on energy saving targets, waste sorting, biodiversity, responsible procurement, promoting a safe, healthy working environment and strong governance structures.

Knowledge is the alpha and omega. The world needs universities that engage critically and constructively, and take responsibility for our shared future by transforming complex challenges into sustainable change.

AAU Strategy: Knowledge for the world 2022-2026



A safe and sustainable world

Over the past years, the world has faced unprecedented extreme weather and natural disasters. In 2024, devastating floods in Bangladesh and Pakistan displaced millions, while record-breaking wildfires in Canada and Southern Europe destroyed vast ecosystems. In 2025, severe heatwaves across India and Southern Europe pushed temperatures above 50°C, and powerful earthquakes in Japan and Turkey caused widespread destruction.

These crises highlight the urgency of global action. Knowledge institutions like Aalborg University contribute by advancing research in resilient energy systems, climate adaptation, and disaster preparedness. Such efforts directly support SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

During 2024 and 2025, geopolitical conflicts and crises have continued to shape global security and stability. War within Europe have created widespread destruction of infrastructure and millions displaced.

Globally renewed fighting triggered one of the world's largest humanitarian emergencies, leaving millions without access to food or healthcare. In 2025 conflicts have intensified, causing severe civilian casualties and regional instability. These crises have highlighted the fragility of international systems and the urgent need for strong institutions and inclusive governance.

Aalborg University play a vital role in addressing these challenges. Through research in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and international cooperation, AAU contributes to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

By fostering dialogue across cultures and sectors, and by educating future leaders in diplomacy and governance, AAU also supports SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). In times of crisis, universities can act as catalysts for knowledge-driven solutions, helping to build a safer, more just, and resilient world.

Denmark faces growing challenges in both cyber security and energy supply. In recent years, cyberattacks have highlighted vulnerabilities in national infrastructure, while the European energy crisis underscored the need for resilient and sustainable energy systems.

These issues are critical for ensuring societal safety and stability. Aalborg University contributes directly to these challenges through research in cyber resilience, digital infrastructure, and green energy transitions. Such work supports SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), and SDG 13 (Climate Action), ensuring that Denmark strengthens its defences while advancing a sustainable and secure energy future.

This report includes descriptions of how AAU through collaborations, research, teaching and within own operations contribute to solving these global and national challenges.



AAU Rector Per Michael Johansen and HRH Prince Joachim of Denmark at the grand opening of the National Defence Technology Centre (NFC) in 2022 (Photo: Lasse Møller Badstue)



1 NO POVERTY

Introducing IT in schools in Western Cape (Photo: private/AAU)



The Project Building Stronger Universities aims to end Poverty

When the fourth phase of Building Stronger Universities (BSU IV) began, the ambition is far beyond strengthening academic institutions – it aimed to tackle one of society’s most persistent challenges: poverty. Through partnerships between universities in East Africa and Danish institutions, BSU IV supports research and education that directly address the structural drivers of deprivation.

At Gulu University in Uganda, the State University of Zanzibar in Tanzania, and the University of Hargeisa in Somaliland, BSU helps build the capacity needed to understand and confront the realities that keep communities impoverished. By improving research facilities, training early-career academics, and developing new teaching programmes, the initiative equips local universities to generate knowledge that can inform policies on livelihoods, health, climate resilience, and equitable access to resources.

Crucially, BSU’s approach is community-oriented. Universities collaborate with local stakeholders to identify practical solutions – from strengthening rural income opportunities to improving public services and supporting vulnerable populations. When universities gain the tools to conduct high-quality research and translate findings into action, they become engines of social development. In this way, BSU IV does

more than build academic excellence. It empowers universities to break cycles of poverty by producing graduates, research, and innovations that improve living conditions and expand opportunities for the most disadvantaged. Through education, knowledge, and partnership, the programme places the fight against poverty at the very heart of its mission.



From Learning to Livelihoods: AAU Students Supporting African Schools

A group of students from Aalborg University travelled to South Africa to support schools in disadvantaged communities. Working alongside the non-profit organisation Green Shoots, they equip schools with data-driven teaching resources, which empowers both students and educators to improve learning outcomes. This targeted educational intervention fosters inclusive learning, boosting future economic opportunities for impoverished communities, and builds resilience through knowledge. The tools are already in use at 339 schools in Western Cape, with ambition to expand further across Africa. This initiative addresses the root causes of poverty by strengthening human capital. Better education increases children’s future prospects for employment and income generation. The collaboration also provides Aalborg University students with real-world experience in solving global challenges, aligning academic research and teaching with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Reducing Financial Barriers to Education

Aalborg University (AAU) works actively to reduce financial inequality and ensure that education remains accessible to all. AAU provides 95.6 % of their students with state education grants (SU), which help secure equal access to higher education regardless of social background. AAU also opens its doors to talented students from low- and lower-middle-income countries. Each semester, the university grants tuition waivers and scholarships to selected applicants from non-EU/EEA countries. In 2024, these included students from Bangladesh, Nepal, Cameroon, India, Sri Lanka and Vietnam – providing opportunities that can help break social cycles through education.

At the local level, students facing temporary financial challenges can turn to Aalborg Foodbank, which distributes free food and offers social support at five locations across the city. In addition, university canteens sell surplus food at reduced prices before closing, ensuring both affordability and less waste. Through these initiatives, AAU helps students in financial need, promotes inclusion, and empowers individuals to create better futures for themselves and their communities.



147
PUBLICATIONS

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Studentmeals in AAU Canteens





Insects for food and feed are a more environmentally friendly protein source (Photo: Enorm Biofactory)



Improved Drought Monitoring as a Tool for Food Security

Researchers at Aalborg University (AAU) and Danish Meteorological Institute (DMI) are launching a new joint project to improve monitoring and prediction of droughts—a climate challenge that threatens agricultural output, food supply and ultimately food security. The project highlights that climate change has led to longer and more intense drought periods in Europe and Denmark in particular. For instance, the dry summer of 2018 and continued droughts through 2021 and into 2023 resulted in large losses for the Danish agricultural sector, estimated at up to 8 billion DKK, with indirect effects on food production and rising prices.

By combining AAU's expertise in large-scale hydrological modelling and satellite observations with DMI's knowledge of weather and climate monitoring, the researchers aim to build Denmark's first hydro-meteorological early-warning system for drought. The system will enable decision-makers and farmers to detect drought conditions earlier, anticipate impacts on crop yields and take proactive measures to secure food supply and stabilize markets. According to project leader Maïke Schumacher, such tools are essential to understand how drought develops, the role of climate change and the consequences for agriculture and food security. This collaboration help protect agricultural production, prevent crop failures.



From Waste to Food: Protein from insects

Aalborg University (AAU) researchers from the Institute of Chemistry & Bioscience are pioneering a sustainable method to turn food and agricultural waste into high-quality insect protein – helping to strengthen global food security. Insects such as fly larvae feed on low-value by-products (e.g., spent grain or rapeseed cake) and, with the help of their gut microbiomes, efficiently convert those waste streams into biomass. Led by Simon Bährndorff, the research integrates advanced techniques – including genome sequencing, microbial community analysis, and enzymatic treatments – to improve insect digestion, safety, and yield.

Their work builds on a broader framework developed in a recent publication that maps out how microbial symbiosis, breeding, and biotechnologies can optimize insect production for both feed and human food. This new approach is circular and scalable: it valorizes residual biomass – often discarded – turning it into nutritious protein. This reduces food waste, minimizes environmental impact, and offers a viable route to sustainable protein production at scale. Such innovation addresses two major challenges at once: waste management and food system resilience. Transforming these side-streams into safe, insect-derived protein supports a more sustainable food system by improving food availability and reducing dependency on conventional livestock.



A New Understanding of Host-Microbe Interaction Could Transform Food Production and Medicine

Researchers from Aalborg University are part of an international collaboration that is changing how scientists understand the relationship between living organisms and the tiny microbes that live on and inside them. The group argues that plants, animals and their microbes should be seen as a united team rather than separate parts – because they constantly influence each other's health, development and ability to grow. Their collective findings were recently published in Science. AAU participates in this global network, which brings together experts from many countries to share data, methods and ideas.

This collaboration is also linked to the Earth Hologenome Initiative, which aims to collect and compare biological data from ecosystems worldwide. The new perspective has major practical implications. In farming, for example, helpful microbes might be used to strengthen crops, make them better at absorbing nutrients or help them withstand stress such as drought. This could lead to more reliable harvests and more efficient use of resources – an important step when the world needs to produce food for a growing population under changing climate conditions. The work also opens new opportunities in medicine, where understanding the partnership between humans and their microbes could lead to better treatments.

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Associate Professor Simon Barhdorff at the microscope in his lab at AAU



133
PUBLICATIONS



Building healthier communities (Photo: Colourbox)

Q

AAU Researchers creates AI that saves lives

Researchers at Aalborg University (AAU) have developed a powerful AI system with the potential to save thousands of lives in intensive care units (ICUs) globally. The AI model, called MITST, uses data from over 200,000 ICU stays in 208 hospitals to predict critically dangerous fluctuations in blood glucose levels—particularly in patients with diabetes. Compared to existing tools, MITST improves prediction accuracy by 5-7%, enabling clinicians to intervene in time and potentially prevent fatal outcomes.

By processing real-time patient data such as blood pressure, lab results, and clinical observations, the system offers a continuous, data-driven forecast of each patient's risk. Although tested on blood sugar regulation, the method is flexible and could be adapted to monitor other critical conditions, making it a scalable decision-support tool across different hospital settings. The project, which spans over five years and is funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation. Enhance patient safety, reduce mortality risks, and strengthen the capacity of health systems to deliver timely, precise care.

🤝

Partnership with municipalities to build healthier communities

In 2024 Aalborg University launched a new research center, PRIMA, in close collaboration with municipal health services to strengthen disease prevention, rehabilitation, and citizen reintegration into everyday life and work. This center represents a cross-

sector partnership where AAU works alongside Aalborg Health Centre, the Rehabilitation and Training Unit, the Research Unit for General Practice, and the Municipal Employment and Education Department. The mission is to develop and implement evidence-based interventions that support the health and employment prospects of people affected by illness. By collaborating directly with the primary healthcare system, PRIMA aims to deliver more coherent and effective care pathways for citizens with chronic conditions. The center is designed to help people maintain or regain their functional capacities, reducing long-term sick leave and addressing public health challenges through preventive care, rehabilitation, and inclusive reintegration. By building a bridge between research and practical municipal health services, AAU contributes to healthier communities and a more sustainable, resilient healthcare system.

 **4775**
PUBLICATIONS

AAU adopted two missions in 2023: one mission is focused on the

Well-being of children and young people



AAU staff and students collaborate towards better mental well-being

50 participants, both staff and students from across Aalborg University, took part in a three-day Life Design workshop with the goal of helping educators gain first-hand experience in using design-thinking tools to support student well-being. The Life Design method, originally developed at Stanford, combines reflection, creativity, and experimentation. Rather than seeking the “correct” answer, the workshop participants were encouraged to explore multiple possible futures through interactive exercises.

By engaging both students and educators in these activities, AAU created a shared space for honest reflection on values, uncertainty, and life purpose. Faculty from across departments reported that working alongside students offered deeper insight into the challenges students face – while students appreciated being part of a collaborative, human-centered dialogue. University leadership sees Life Design as a valuable complement to AAU’s problem-based learning model, because it helps foster creativity, resilience, and a sense of belonging. By embedding Life Design through active involvement from staff and students, AAU is promoting a more supportive and reflective academic climate – helping people build stronger mental well-being.

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Participants in Life Design Workshop at AAU



4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Participants at the AAU Learning Day at Aalborg University City Campus



Research Project Supporting Vulnerable Children from Kindergarten to School

Aalborg University researchers have launched a five-year project, Thriving through Transitions, to examine how children in vulnerable positions experience the shift from kindergarten to school, and later to middle grades.

Led by Associate Professor Jin Hui Li in partnership with University College Absalon and contributes towards inclusive, equitable, and quality education by reducing social barriers, strengthening support for vulnerable children, and fostering environments that help every child thrive. The research aims to understand how social and class-based inequalities affect children’s well-being, sense of belonging, and resilience during critical educational transitions.

A special emphasis is placed on children who fall into “grey zones” of vulnerability—those without formal diagnoses or institutional labels but still facing challenges that impact their daily lives. By involving educators, parents, pedagogues, and psychological-counselling professionals, the project seeks to develop practical, locally grounded strategies to support smoother and fairer educational transitions. Through participatory workshops, the researchers will translate insights into actionable pedagogical practices that promote equity, belonging, and well-being for all children.



Professor Receives Prestigious International Award for Advancing Problem Based Learning

Associate Professor Bente Nørgaard from Aalborg University has received a prestigious international honorary award by being named a Fellow of SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education). This honor recognizes her more than 25 years of dedication to building bridges between academic research and practical engineering education. She was celebrated as a “Champion of Continuing Education, Problem-Based Learning, and global capacity building,” highlighting her long-standing influence in the SEFI community. In her role at AAU’s Department of Sustainability and Planning, she leads initiatives on lifelong learning and educational development. Bente Nørgaard has also held key roles in global organizations like IACEE and IUPN, further pushing forward the agenda of engineering education worldwide. This fellowship not only acknowledges her individual contributions but also underscores AAU’s role in advancing inclusive and high-quality engineering education across borders.

533
PUBLICATIONS



AAU Learning Day 2025 Focuses on Better Learning for a Stronger Future

On 9 May 2025, Aalborg University (AAU) held its annual Learning Day, under the theme “Education Is the Most Important Investment for Society and for the Individual.” The event took place in Aalborg (at AAU SUND), while parallel gatherings occurred in Copenhagen (around 40 staff) and Esbjerg (25 staff and students). Vice Dean for Education at the Faculty of Medicine, Jeppe Emmersen, opened the day by emphasizing that education offers the greatest long-term return for both individuals and societies – and stressed the university’s commitment to continuously improving its teaching. The keynote speaker, Bella Marckmann from Denmark’s Evaluation Institute (EVA), addressed the challenges of high dropout rates and students’ well-being. She highlighted how strong learning environments, meaningful engagement, and social cohesion are critical for reducing dropout and enhancing academic success. Marckmann argued that “learning for understanding” requires interactive teaching, collaborative work, and diverse student environments – all principles that align closely with AAU’s problem-based learning (PBL) model. Later, participants explored microcredentials, generative AI in teaching, and didactic strategies in workshops. AAU also honored outstanding teachers: Sune Qvotrup Jensen was named Teacher of the Year, and Martin B. Østergaard received the AAU Pedagogy Prize for his innovative work on balancing group-based PBL with individual thesis supervision.

By bringing together educators to reflect on teaching quality and student well-being, Learning Day reinforces AAU’s dedication to continuous pedagogical development – thereby strengthening inclusive, high-quality education.

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Bente Nørgaard, Associate Professor in the Department of Sustainability and Planning named Fellow of SEFI (European Society of Engineering Education)



5 GENDER EQUALITY

Celebrating (Photo: Colourbox)



AAU Researchers Win Award for Homophobia Study
 Researchers at Aalborg University (AAU), together with Statens Serum Institut, have been awarded the "Årets Laks" (Salmon of the Year) prize by LGBT+ Denmark for their pioneering study mapping the prevalence of homophobia in Denmark. Their research, conducted under Project SEXUS, surveyed 31,808 Danes aged 15 to 89, making it the first nationally representative study on moral disapproval of same-sex sexual behaviour in Denmark. The results revealed that over 20 percent of Danes consider sex between people of the same gender to be morally unacceptable.

The findings have sparked broad public debate – major newspapers published editorials, and several ministers publicly commented. According to LGBT+ Denmark, the research is a milestone: it challenges the assumption that Denmark has already "arrived" when it comes to equality for sexual minorities.

For the AAU reserachers, the recognition is particularly meaningful because it comes from the community their work addresses. As Professor Christian Graugaard states, the study could help explain why LGBT+ individuals in Denmark still face mental health challenges, and further motivate research into how to protect and support vulnerable sexual minority groups.



AAU Business School wants to Boost Gender Balance in Economics

Aalborg University (AAU) Business School is raising concern about the worsening gender imbalance in its economics programme. In 2024, only 18 percent of students in this programme were women – a steep drop from 27 percent just a year earlier. Mette Vinther Larsen, Head of Department, argues that the challenge goes beyond recruitment: the real task is retaining female students. She emphasises the need for more female role models whom students can identify with and a supportive environment where women feel they can thrive academically and shape their careers to match their needs.

To address this, AAU Business School has set up several initiatives in collaboration with the University of Copenhagen and the gender-equality think tank Equalis. Key measures include offering study abroad opportunities, flexible elective courses, and a consistent prioritisation of diversity across all levels of the department.



152
PUBLICATIONS



Gender Equality at AAU

The Committee for Equality and Diversity (ULD) at Aalborg University is tasked with the strategic development of equality and inclusion across the university. ULD ensures that diverse perspectives—including gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and disability—are promoted in recruitment, career development, and university culture. Since 2017, the committee has led inclusive recruitment efforts and diversity training. At their February 2025 meeting, members discussed how to increase ULD's visibility and better integrate feedback from early-career researchers into a new equality action plan.

Aalborg University has launched a new series of diversity and inclusion workshops aimed at exposing and challenging unconscious bias. Participants explore how hidden prejudices influence communication, leadership, and decision-making. Courses cover unconscious bias, inclusive language, inclusive leadership, and cultural intelligence. All AAU staff are invited to attend free workshops to build a more inclusive, equitable campus culture

Back in 2023 Aalborg University launched an ongoing pilot project to anonymize job applications to boost diversity. In this project, personal details like gender, age, ethnicity, and civil status will be removed from CVs and application forms before they reach hiring committees. This aims to reduce unconscious bias, ensuring that hiring decisions are based on qualifications – not personal characteristics.

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

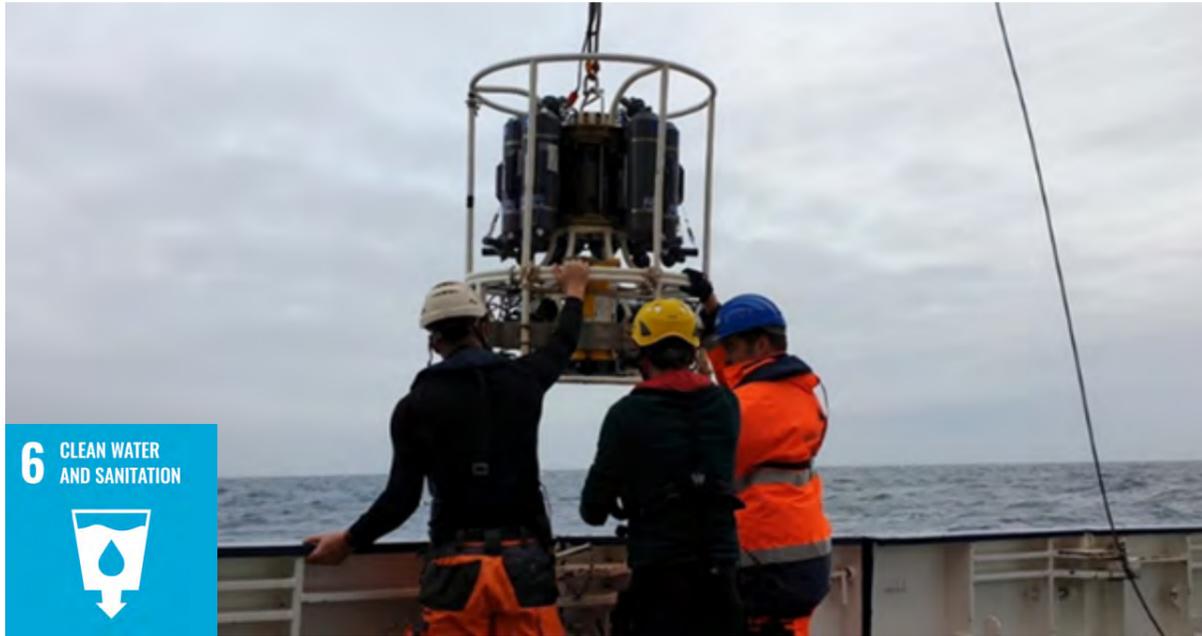
50% of external members in AAU's board must be female and

31% of AAU management must be female



Students engaged in dialogue at AAU





6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Reseachers from AAU placing sediment sampler in the Limfjord (Photo: BUILD, AAU)



The Road to an Effective Method for Removing PFAS from Water

PFAS, known as “forever chemicals,” are increasingly found in food and drinking water. At Aalborg University’s Department of Chemistry and Bioscience, two areas of expertise—cyclodextrin chemistry and membrane technology—are being combined to tackle this challenge.

The project, led by Associate Professors Mads Koustrup Jørgensen and Thorbjørn Terndrup Nielsen, aims to create a simple, cost-effective solution. By rinsing membranes in an alcohol solution containing cyclodextrins, these molecules attach to the surface, enabling PFAS absorption without altering production processes. When saturated, membranes can be cleaned and re-treated for reuse.

Although still in its early phase, the approach shows great promise. Researchers hope to deliver not only an efficient PFAS removal method but also a scalable technology adaptable to other pollutants—benefiting both wastewater treatment and drinking water safety.



408
PUBLICATIONS

98 cold water fountains across AAU



Limfjorden holds tons of microplastic

Researchers from the research group Urban Pollution at AAU have discovered large amounts of microplastic in Limfjorden, especially near wastewater outlets and off Aalborg. Sediment samples reveal up to 100,000 times more microplastic on the seabed than in the water, with estimates ranging from 4 to 165 tons across the 1.500 square km fjord.

Microplastic threaten marine ecosystems by disrupting food chains, harming mussels and fish, and reducing biodiversity. They may also pose health risks to humans through seafood consumption, though clear evidence in Limfjorden is lacking. Advanced analysis detected particles smaller than a human hair, highlighting the complexity of the pollution.

The findings underscore the urgent need for further research, monitoring, and action to mitigate environmental and health impacts. Without understanding the scale of contamination, effective strategies cannot be developed, stresses Jes Vollertsen, project lead at Aalborg University

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

50%

reduction in water consumption per user in 2022 compared to 2006

Outdoor area of the main campus in Aalborg East (Photo: Emilie Bach Pedersen)





7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

AI generated image of Aalborg East in 2045



Collaborating for Sustainable Offshore Wind

Aalborg University is leading a new European project named SUSTAINOW – Sustainable Offshore Wind, together with partners from 11 countries including Denmark’s Environmental Portal and Vestas. The collaboration aims to overcome a major obstacle in offshore wind planning: fragmented marine data. Currently, data about the sea is not centrally collected, making it difficult to assess environmental and social impacts.

The project will build a transnational data platform and develop digital decision-support tools that integrate ecological and socioeconomic factors—such as wildlife, fishing interests, and infrastructure material use. These tools are intended to support both governmental planning agencies and commercial developers, helping them choose wind farm locations more sustainably.

Project lead Ivar Lyhne of AAU explains that they are “bridging the gap between data, models and the concrete needs of stakeholders.” The first prototypes are slated to be tested in the North Sea, with plans to expand to the Baltic Sea and Atlantic Ocean. Through this strong cross-sector and cross-national partnership, SUSTAINOW aims to minimize risks, reduce project delays, and maximize environmental and social benefits from offshore wind development.



Research Powers Aalborg East’s Energy-Positive Vision

Researchers at Aalborg University have produced a new report showing that Aalborg East could become one of Europe’s first Positive Energy Districts (PEDs)—urban areas that generate more energy annually than they consume. Led by Associate Professor Kristian Olesen through the research project FLEXPOSTS, the study outlines a roadmap to fully transform the district by 2045, contributing to Denmark’s national transition to climate neutrality and 100% renewable energy. The researchers identify promising technologies—thermal storage, heat pumps, waste heat recovery, cogeneration from industry, rooftop solar PV, and local wind power—that could help Aalborg East cover around 20% of its electricity needs locally by mid-century. However, due to limited on-site electricity production, the district will remain interconnected with the broader energy system, supplying excess green energy and drawing from external sources when required. This research highlights how cutting-edge urban energy planning can align with SDG 7, by advancing clean, locally produced, and sustainable energy solutions.



4106
PUBLICATIONS



Sustainable energy at AAU

Aalborg University (AAU) contributes actively to SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy through both its educational programmes and its leading research environments. AAU’s energy-focused degrees, such as the Bachelor of Energy Engineering and the MSc in Sustainable Energy Engineering as well as multiple educations in planning and sustainability, equip students with strong technical and analytical skills in renewable energy technologies, energy conversion, power systems, and sustainable energy integration. These programmes combine problem-based learning with hands-on laboratory work, ensuring graduates can design and implement the clean energy solutions needed in a global green transition.

On the research side, AAU Energy is one of Europe’s most recognised environments within sustainable energy technologies. Developing innovations in energy storage, power electronics, wind and solar integration, hydrogen and Power-to-X systems, and intelligent energy management—technologies essential to a reliable and renewable future energy supply. Complementing this technological expertise, the research group Sustainable Energy Planning focuses on system-level solutions. The group develops long-term energy strategies and planning tools, including the internationally used EnergyPLAN model, which supports cities, regions, and national governments in designing cost-efficient and 100% renewable energy systems.

Aalborg University’s Campus Service has rolled out several concrete energy-saving initiatives. They’ve lowered room temperatures to 19°C across public buildings and turned off decorative lighting. They added a feature in the AAU Building Support App that lets staff and students suggest energy-saving ideas. Meanwhile, they focus on energy renovation, more efficient buildings, and better use of space to cut consumption (Aalborg University’s Energy-Saving Initiatives Yield Significant Results - Aalborg Universitet)

52%

reduction in energy consumption per user in 2022 compared to 2006

Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all



A Breakthrough in Long-Term Renewable Energy Storage

Researchers at Aalborg University have developed a breakthrough technology that can store green energy—like excess solar and wind power—for months as heat instead of in chemical batteries. Led by Associate Professor Manohar Chirumamilla from the Department of Materials and Production, the team created a thermal emitter that remains stable even at extreme temperatures for over six months. Instead of storing energy in chemical form, this “thermal battery” stores excess electricity as heat in affordable, scalable materials. When needed, the stored heat can be converted back to power with thermophotovoltaic cells. This technology also offers industrial benefits: it can recover waste heat from factories and transform it into electricity. Developed in collaboration with Technische Universität Hamburg, Universität Hamburg, and Helmholtz-Zentrum Hereon, the system is now mature enough for industrial-scale testing and can help solve one of the main challenges of renewable energy.

AAU adopted two missions in 2023: one mission is focused on

Sustainable energy supply





8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Professor and student at AAU (Photo: AAU)



Bridging the gap to a safe work environment

The research project “Vocational schools as bridge-builders to safe work for young apprentices and students” aims to improve safety and working conditions for young people in vocational education. It combines evidence-based occupational safety training at vocational schools with stronger support on actual workplaces. Teachers from schools visit workplaces, and students receive training focused on safety culture, accident prevention, and practical competencies for safer work.

Beyond immediate safety gains, the project aims to build an evidence-based foundation for prevention strategies that – if successful – can be scaled up across all vocational programmes, affecting hundreds of thousands of students and apprentices. This research project ensure safer working conditions and supporting young people’s ability to complete their vocational education and enter stable, decent jobs. Through reducing accidents and enabling a safer path into employment, it strengthens both individual well-being and sustainable labour market conditions.



611
PUBLICATIONS



Shaping Future Careers Through Collaboration

Aalborg University’s project-based learning model gives students frequent opportunities to collaborate – often in groups – on real problems and to choose their own topics within a broad thematic framework. Crucially, many of these “student projects” are carried out in cooperation with external companies or organisations. Through such cooperation, students work on real-life cases drawn from business, industry or public organisations and receive mentorship from company-based supervisors in addition to academic oversight from AAU. This collaboration gives students practical insight into how organisations function, bridging the gap between academic theory and workplace reality. It helps them build a professional network – contacts in companies – which can be a valuable resource for future job opportunities. Moreover, it lets them develop key skills like teamwork, problem solving, communication and project management – qualities that employers value. By experiencing real-world working conditions and building networks before graduation, AAU prepares students to enter the labour market with relevant practical skills and professional contacts. In this way, the AAU model supports decent and meaningful employment.

The Course Sustainable Tourism Transitions and Societal Challenges complements this by focusing on broader societal challenges and transitions in tourism, equipping students with conceptual frameworks to understand how tourism intersects with social, ethical and environmental issues. Through critical analyses, stakeholder mapping, strategic planning and reflection, students learn how to design tourism models and policies that can sustain both local economies and communities. This education builds expertise that helps future tourism professionals implement sustainable, responsible tourism – supporting stable jobs, long-term business viability, and community well-being. By fostering knowledge and competencies to manage sustainable tourism, AAU helps prepare graduates for meaningful roles in the tourism sector or related fields, contributing to sustainable economic growth and decent work.



Education in sustainable tourism

AAU’s Sustainable Tourism modules provide students with both theoretical and practical tools to analyse and shape tourism in ways that respect environmental, social and economic sustainability.

The course “Sustainable Tourism Development: Changes in Businesses and Destinations” explores how tourism businesses and destinations can transform – measuring sustainability, engaging stakeholders, and designing strategies that balance economic viability and ecological/social responsibility.

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Photo: Emilie Bach Pedersen





9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

(Photo: iStock/Westersoe)



Historic Funding for Green Transition in Construction

Construction accounts for 37 % of global greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, a research-based approach is needed to change the way we build, operate, maintain and renovate our buildings. The Villum Foundation has granted a record DKK 1 billion to a new research program, Civil Engineering and the Green Transition in the Built Environment (CEBE), led by Aalborg University, Aarhus University, DTU, and SDU. The initiative aims to transform the construction sector, by developing sustainable methods, materials, and practices.

CEBE will focus on seven research areas covering the entire lifecycle of buildings and infrastructure—from design and construction to reuse and lifetime extension. The program also strengthens education, attracts international talent, and fosters collaboration with industry to ensure practical solutions.

This 10-year investment is Villum Foundation’s largest ever and positions Denmark as a European leader in climate-conscious construction. Beyond reducing environmental impact, the program seeks to create resilient, circular, and regenerative building practices while bridging Danish research with global challenges through strategic international partnerships.

The ambition: set new standards for sustainable construction and accelerate the green transition in the built environment.



1276
PUBLICATIONS



AAU Students Build Electric Race Car for Formula Student

Electric vehicles are not only taking over public roads—they’re now racing on world-famous tracks. In the innovative Formula Student competition, teams from over 150 universities design and build race cars to showcase engineering skills in design, performance, and project management.

AAU Racing, Aalborg University’s team, has transitioned after 20 years of making fossil-fuel cars to electric racers which required a multidisciplinary approach. “A gasoline engine is all mechanics. Now we need energy engineers for the battery and electronics engineers for battery management,” says Jakob Ammitzbøll Andersen, mechanical engineering student. Five study programs are involved in the project.

The car is nearly ready, with battery wiring as the final step. Next, the team plans to add sensors to collect data on brakes, wheels, and driver behavior, enabling detailed performance analysis. Funding is still needed, but the goal is clear: optimize both car and driver for competitive racing.

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

In 2022 AAU launched **8500 m²** Innovation HUB





10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

AAU research contributes to measuring how floods impact different groups in society (Photo: Colourbox)



Protecting the Most Vulnerable Citizens from Climate Disasters

Researchers at Aalborg Universitet have developed Denmark’s first “social vulnerability” and “social flood-risk” indices to measure how floods impact different groups in society. They show that age, health status, language skills and income level significantly affect who is most at risk of flood events.

The study finds that children, the elderly, individuals with health problems or limited Danish skills, and economically disadvantaged people are especially vulnerable to floods – even when they don’t live directly in the flooded zone.

By integrating social factors alongside economic ones into flood risk assessment – and embedding these into the implementation of the EU Floods Directive – the research enables more inclusive climate adaptation planning. Addressing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations is intimately linked to ending poverty: these groups often lack resources to protect themselves against hazards, and when disasters strike, they are less able to recover and rebuild in line with target 1.5 about building resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.



RESPONSIVE: Reducing Inequality in Social Services

On 20 May 2025, Aalborg University (AAU), in collaboration with the EU-funded Horizon Europe RESPONSIVE project, hosted an international webinar on strengthening responsiveness in social services through policy and legal frameworks. The online event gathered researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to discuss how social services across Europe can better respond to people’s needs and voices, especially those of often excluded groups such as youth at risk, people with disabilities, and individuals experiencing mental health challenges. The webinar shared key findings from six countries – Austria, Denmark, France, Poland, Portugal and Romania – and explored ways to shift citizen engagement from passive consultation to meaningful co-creation in the design, governance and evaluation of services. Participants examined how improved legal structures, transparent decision-making, and resource allocation can empower vulnerable citizens, enhance trust in services, and promote inclusion.



433
PUBLICATIONS

No. 4

university in the world on SDG 10 in the THE Impact Rankings 2024 (out of 1108 institutions)



Reduce inequality within and among countries



A New Understanding Global Inequality to Drive Change

Aalborg University has secured a prestigious €2.5 million European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant to support a five-year international research project aimed at deepening our understanding of global inequality. Led by Professor Steffen Bo Jensen, the project (CONFINED: Unpacking confined lives) brings together researchers and partners from Denmark, Australia, the Netherlands, Lebanon, Thailand, and South Africa to study how forms of confinement and exclusion, such as incarceration, marginalization, and displacement, shape people’s lives and opportunities across borders.

Rather than analyzing individuals in isolation, the research focuses on family networks affected by exclusion to reveal how systemic barriers limit freedom and reinforce inequality. By generating new global knowledge and a shared framework for understanding these interconnected forms of social exclusion, the project will help inform policies and practices aimed at reducing inequality and social injustice.

90% of Danish employees are satisfied and wish to stay at AAU

79% international VIP are satisfied



Professor Steen Bo Jensen, PI on CONFINED (Photo: Tor Bagger)



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Our houses keep growing (Photo: Kenneth Bagge Jørgensen Colourbox)



Sustainable Suburbs: Rethinking the Single Family Home

Researchers at Aalborg University are rethinking the future of Danish suburban housing as demographic change, climate challenges, and shifting lifestyle patterns make the traditional single family home less sustainable. Their work explores how aging suburban areas can be transformed into more compact, resource efficient, and socially connected neighborhoods.

By examining new housing typologies, shared facilities, and climate adapted urban design, the project supports municipalities in planning communities that are resilient, inclusive, and better aligned with contemporary needs. This research promotes sustainable urban development and helping cities use land and resources more efficiently. It also strengthens local communities by encouraging mixed use environments, improved mobility options, and accessible public spaces. Through evidence based insights and collaboration with public stakeholders, AAU contributes to creating suburban areas that remain livable, adaptable, and environmentally responsible for future generations.



The SWIM Project: Climate Resilient Cities

The SWIM project at Aalborg University is advancing new knowledge to help some of the world's largest and fastest growing megacities cope with intensifying urban heat. As climate change drives temperatures upward, densely built areas face severe risks to public health, infrastructure, and overall liveability. Through international collaboration, AAU researchers develop data driven methods to map how heat moves through complex urban environments and to identify the neighbourhoods most vulnerable to extreme temperatures.

This work directly supports SDG 11 by strengthening cities' ability to plan for climate resilience and protect residents from environmental hazards. By combining advanced modelling, satellite observations, and local insights, the project provides urban planners with evidence based strategies such as ventilation corridors, reflective materials, and expanded green spaces. These approaches reduce heat stress, improve urban comfort, and contribute to more sustainable and adaptable megacities. Through SWIM, AAU helps ensure that rapidly growing urban regions remain safe, healthy, and liveable under a changing climate.



691
PUBLICATIONS



Preserving Culture and Strengthening Communities

Researchers at Aalborg University are helping Indigenous dancing communities in India preserve their cultural heritage while strengthening the resilience of rural settlements. Through close collaboration with local groups, AAU supports the documentation of traditional dance practices and the development of digital tools that make cultural knowledge accessible to younger generations.

The work also highlights how cultural identity, community cohesion, and sustainable local development are deeply interconnected. By empowering communities to safeguard their heritage, the project contributes to protecting the world's cultural and natural heritage. AAU's research demonstrates how cultural preservation can reinforce social sustainability, support inclusive community planning, and enhance the long term vitality of rural areas. This approach ensures that cultural traditions remain a living part of community life while helping local settlements adapt to social and economic change in a sustainable way.

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Shanghai, one of the megacities in Asia (Photo: Colourbox)





12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Thomas Ditlev Brunø in front of the testbed's new smart disassembly station (Photo: Industriens Fond)



The Circular Factory: Designing for Remanufacturing

Future manufacturing must embrace circularity, treating used products as resources for new value streams. This shift reduces resource consumption, environmental impact, and dependence on global supply chains. Aalborg University's Circular Factory project, supported by the Danish Industry Foundation, explores practical solutions in a test bed setup for product take-back, disassembly, and component grading.

In AAU's lab, a reverse production line dismantles products, sorts components, and assesses quality for reuse. RFID tags ensure traceability, while technologies like pick-by-light and automated processes support remanufacturing. Future iterations will include plastic reprocessing and computer vision for automated quality checks.

The goal is to move from "design for manufacturing" to "design for remanufacturing," integrating circularity from the start. This approach strengthens resilience, reduces CO₂ emissions, and mitigates reliance on critical raw materials. With upcoming EU requirements like the Digital Product Passport, circular strategies will become essential for competitiveness and sustainability.

746
PUBLICATIONS



Indonesian Fungus Turns Beer Waste into Sausages

Researchers at Aalborg University have developed a sustainable way to transform beer production leftovers into protein-rich food. Using an Indonesian fungus, they ferment spent grain - normally used for animal feed - into an ingredient that can replace part of the meat in products like sausages.

The process boosts the value of spent grain while reducing reliance on traditional livestock production, which has a heavy environmental footprint. Tests show fermented grain works well in sausages, pasta, and even snack bars. At Denmark's Food Festival, blind tastings revealed that sausages with 10-20% fermented grain were rated tastier than regular ones. With global demand for protein rising, this approach offers both economic and climate benefits. Researchers are now exploring other byproducts, such as oat hulls and rapeseed cake, to establish fungal fermentation as a universal method for upgrading food waste into high-value, climate-friendly ingredients.

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns



Campus operation: Reduction of Plastic Waste part of AAU's Climate Plan

Aalborg University has initiated concrete actions to reduce the use of single-use products and plastic in its own operations. In 2024, the university's catering provider, Jaspers Torvekøkken, reduced the use of disposable items, including plastic, and has set an ambitious target of an 80% reduction by the end of 2025. This initiative supports the university's overall goal of minimizing the environmental impact of its daily operations.

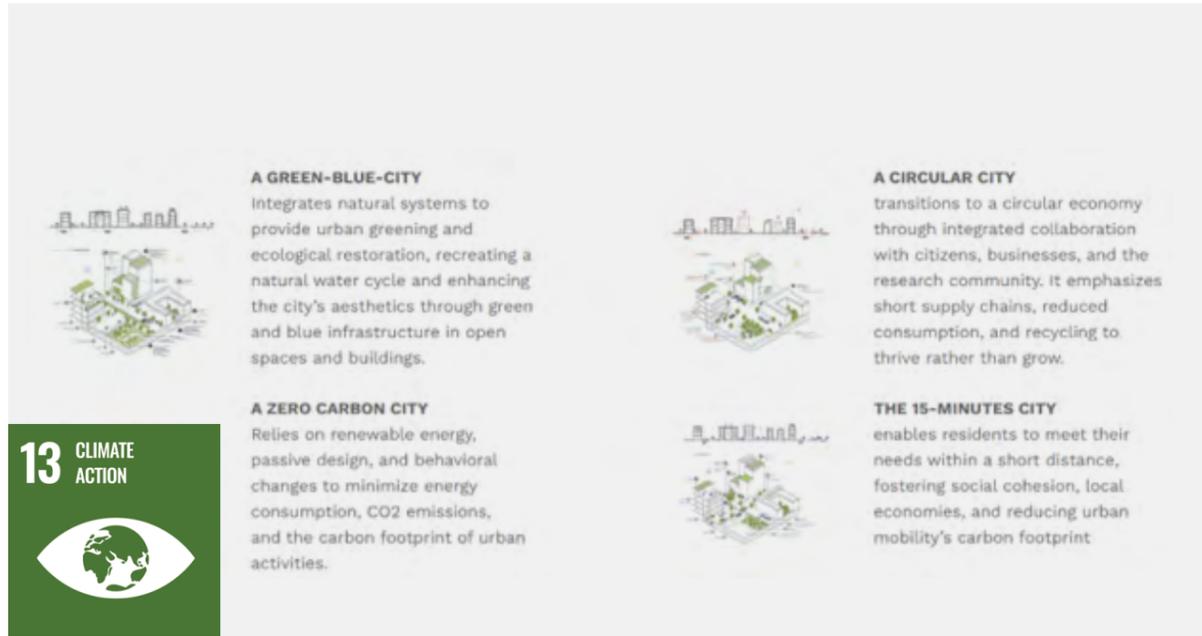
As part of this effort, an agreement was made in 2024 with the company Vytal to supply circular packaging to the university. This packaging is designed for re-

use and contributes to reducing plastic consumption, minimizing plastic waste, and increasing the recycling of plastic products. The agreement with Vytal marks an important step toward a more sustainable and resource-efficient operation.

These initiatives are an integrated part of AAU's climate plan and support the university's efforts to meet the national climate targets by 2030. The reduction of plastic waste is thus a concrete subgoal in the university's strategy for green transition and sustainability.

Snacks at Madens Folkemøde (Photo: Daniella Højby-Jensen, Teknologisk Institut)





The UCCRN Urban Design Climate Workshop City Visions (UCCRN.education)



UCCRN_edu - The Urban Climate Change Research Network for Higher Education

UCCRN_edu is an Erasmus+ cooperation partnership launched by world-leading Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) which include members of the Urban Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN), an international consortium dedicated to foster multidisciplinary knowledge-based cross-sectoral action on climate change mitigation and adaptation from an urban perspective.

Thanks to the Erasmus+ opportunity, AAU and their project partners have reinforced their mission of supporting urban climate action in Europe and beyond.

The project developed, trialed and refined modules aimed at overcoming existing gaps in education on climate-resilient urban planning, design and governance.

The Partnership now aims at developing an educational alliance to form the next generation of urban climate leaders, able to navigate the complexity of the interconnected knowledge domains to foster urban climate action as hybrid and multidisciplinary new professionals, real factors of change in research, design and policymaking.

UCCRN_edu project pathways:

- Integrate Mitigation and Adaptation
- Coordinate Disaster Risk Reduction and CC Adaptation
- Co-generate Risk Information
- Focus on Disadvantaged Populations
- Advance Governance, Finance, and Knowledge Networks

 **742**
PUBLICATIONS



AAU Climate Plan 2030

Aalborg University (AAU) aims to be internationally recognized as a mission-driven university contributing to sustainable development. Through its strategy Knowledge for the World 2022-2026 and Climate Plan 2030, AAU commits to reducing its own climate footprint while generating knowledge for climate-friendly solutions via education, research, collaboration, and innovation.

In 2024, AAU adopted three ambitious climate targets:

- Climate neutrality in scope 1 and 2 by 2030
- 70% reduction in scope 3 emissions per FTE by 2030 (compared to 1990)
- Full climate neutrality by 2045

The Climate Plan aligns with the Paris Agreement, national CO₂ reduction goals, and UN Sustainable Development Goals. Implementation will involve organizational anchoring, continuous evaluation, and cooperation with utility companies, suppliers, and partners.

The plan distinguishes between a positive handprint through the university's core tasks and a footprint in the areas where AAU generates greenhouse gases. The climate handprint reflects AAU's positive impact through research, knowledge, innovation, education, and collaboration to influence attitudes and enable climate action. It is assessed qualitatively, not measured directly.

The climate footprint covers AAU's greenhouse gas emissions from activities like travel, campus operations, procurement, and waste. AAU aims to reduce this through efficiency, innovation, and behavioral change, tracked annually in a climate account. The climate plan defines goals for three handprints and six footprints.

Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts



AAU Emissions calculated for 2022

AAU emitted 57,850 tonnes CO₂e in 2022. Since 1990, emissions per full-time equivalent (FTE) have dropped, while absolute emissions fell nearly 5%, despite a fivefold university growth from 3,807 FTEs in 1990 to 19,221 in 2022.

Per FTE reductions by scope:

- Scope 1: 91%
- Scope 2: 97%
- Scope 3: 38%

Overall, AAU has cut emissions by 70% per FTE since 1990. The university will continue reductions toward 2030, focusing on scope 3, and aim for full climate neutrality by 2045.

CLIMATE TARGETS

- Aalborg University has reduced its greenhouse gas emission by 70 percent in 2030 (1990 baseline)
- Aalborg University is climate neutral no later than 2045
- Aalborg University will contribute to national fulfillment of the 70 percent reduction in 2030 and climate neutrality in 2045 in the cheapest and best possible way while striving to make it technologically, organisationally, and humanely possible to further enhance the ambition of these targets.



Marine Analytics using Computer Vision: to automatically detect and classify marine organisms (Photo: Malte Pedersen, PhD Student, AAU)



Storm Surge in Gjøl

Two hundred years ago, a violent storm changed Limfjorden forever. In 1825, the North Sea broke through the narrow strip between Agger and Harbøre, flooding fields, homes, and villages. Saltwater and new species replaced traditional fish like herring and eel, while oysters and plaice arrived. Fishermen adapted with new gear, and ambitious locals built piers and modern dikes. Towns such as Lemvig, Thisted, and Nykøbing Mors thrived, challenging Aalborg's dominance. Suddenly, Limfjorden was a gateway to international trade with Norway, Germany, and Britain.

Historian Bo Poulsen shared this dramatic story in a fascinating lecture for people in Gjøl, a former island in Limfjorden.

The sold-out event was hosted by Folkeuniversitet Jammerbugt in collaboration with Gjøl Nature and Culture Café. The presentation was based on research into the collapse of local herring fishery caused by a complex of overfishing, new fishing gear and storm-induced salinity changes and related new species.



No. 3
 university in the world on SDG 14 in the THE Impact Rankings 2024 (out of 628 institutions)



Detection of Marine Animals in Brackish Waters

Underwater photos can be colorful and exotic and are often taken on coral reefs in crystal clear waters. The Danish realities can be somewhat more muddy and much less clear but still very useful.

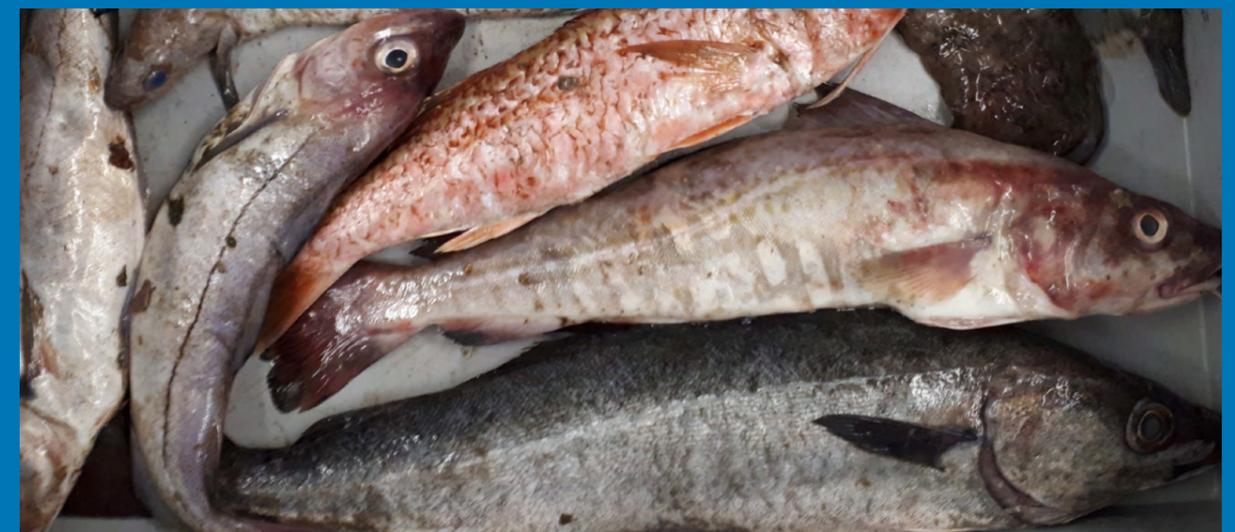
Researchers from Aalborg University have introduced the Brackish Dataset, the first publicly available annotated underwater image dataset captured in temperate brackish waters. The dataset includes sequences of fish, crabs, starfish, shrimps, and jellyfish recorded in Limfjorden, Denmark, under varying visibility conditions. It supports the development of robust computer vision systems for marine monitoring, crucial for biodiversity protection and sustainable fisheries.

To establish a baseline, state-of-the-art models were fine-tuned and tested on the dataset. This resource is part of a long-term project using permanently mounted cameras for continuous marine observation. The Brackish Dataset fills a critical gap in marine research and provides a foundation for future algorithm development and environmental monitoring. Key researchers are Thomas B Moeslund and Malte Pedersen and their colleagues at the The Visual Analysis and Perception lab.

Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

265
 PUBLICATIONS

AAU research contributes to reducing the climate impact of fishing (Photo: Niels Madsen)





15 LIFE ON LAND

The AAU research team for Microflora Danica (from left-to-right): Thomas B.N. Jensen, Caitlin Singleton, Mads Albertsen, and Per Halkjær Nielsen (Photo: Aalborg University)



Historic Danish Research Maps the Invisible World of Microbes

Researchers at Aalborg University and partners have created Microflora Danica—the world’s first national atlas of microorganisms. The project mapped over 140,000 bacterial species in Denmark, most previously unknown to science, offering groundbreaking insight into nature’s “engine room.”

Microorganisms regulate carbon and nitrogen cycles, influence greenhouse gas emissions, and are vital for soil fertility and water quality. This knowledge can guide nature restoration, land-use planning, and green transition initiatives.

The study analyzed 10,683 samples from forests, fields, lakes, coasts, and urban areas using DNA sequencing. Results reveal significantly lower microbial diversity in agricultural and urban landscapes compared to natural ecosystems. Researchers also discovered new bacteria involved in nitrogen metabolism and greenhouse gas formation—knowledge that could transform land management.

“This is like exploring a new world,” says Professor Mads Albertsen. “We’ve completed the first part of the journey. Next, we’ll use this knowledge to rethink how we manage land and ecosystems.”

The findings, published in Nature, mark a milestone in understanding Denmark’s microbiome and its role in environmental sustainability.

10 new insect hotels at Aalborg main campus

179 PUBLICATIONS



Art Creating New Life on Campus

Aalborg University has installed a striking new art-work called Horizontal Cathedral on its Aalborg East campus, featuring four towering 12-metre sculptures that blend nature and technology. The work, created by artist Uffe Isolotto, uses eelgrass collected from the Limfjord placed atop steel-structured “tree-like” forms. Over time, surrounding plants are expected to grow into the eelgrass crowns, fostering a new biodiverse micro-ecosystem. By highlighting the interdependence of natural elements and human innovation, the installation encourages the university community to reflect on ecosystems and biodiversity and inspires conversations about sustaining and valuing plant life in urban spaces.

75,000 m²
of wild nature at AAU



Part of the art piece Horizontal Cathedral on AAU’s main campus (Photo: Sofie Astrup)

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



Ukrainian flag on AAU Campus Copenhagen, 2022 (Photo: William Holler Brændstrup)



AAU Partners with Ukrainian University for peace and recovery

Aalborg University is collaborating with Danish partners to support the development of higher education in Ukraine's Mykolaiv region as part of the country's post-war recovery. Through a partnership with Admiral Makarov National University of Shipbuilding (NUoS), AAU will contribute to strengthening education, research and institutional capacity.

The collaboration includes staff and student exchanges, joint research and training in Problem-Based Learning (PBL), which promotes critical thinking, collaboration and democratic values. Funded by the Orient Steamship Company Foundation, the two-year project (2025-2026) aims to support NUoS in becoming a modern research and innovation hub. By building resilient academic institutions and sharing knowledge across borders.



380
PUBLICATIONS



Supporting Children's Rights Through Better Practice

SAMVÆR: Support and Sustainable Development in Vulnerable Children's Everyday Life (SOUL) project at Aalborg University focuses on improving the quality of contact between children placed in out-of-home care and their biological parents.

The research addresses the complex emotional, social and institutional challenges involved in supervised and supported contact, where conflicting interests often make it difficult for the child's voice to be heard and respected. The project develops a new practice-based theory and research-driven method that places children's needs, interests and everyday experiences at the centre of decision-making, aiming to strengthen cooperation, prevent conflict and support children in forming meaningful narratives about their relationships.

SAMVÆR runs until 2026 with funding from the Velux Foundation, bringing together academic researchers and local practice partners to enhance supportive family contact and ensure children's participation and rights are upheld. By promoting inclusive and responsive practices, the project supports justice, participation and well-being for vulnerable children.



Nordic Research in Justice, Rights and Criminal Prevention

The NORDJUST – Nordic Research Network in Criminal Justice, Punishment and Prevention is an active collaborative research network at Aalborg University that connects scholars across criminology and law to study how criminal justice systems balance punishment and prevention in modern societies.

The network investigates key issues such as the quality of legislation, the expansion of penal measures, and the legal and ethical implications these trends have for human rights and fair justice systems. Through interdisciplinary dialogue and research activities, including presentations and ongoing studies, NORDJUST aims to deepen understanding of contemporary criminal justice challenges in the Nordic context and beyond.

The network also supports research projects initiated in 2025 and beyond, such as examining legal boundaries between punishment and prevention and broader penal policy consequences. By advancing evidence-based knowledge on criminal justice policy and governance, NORDJUST promotes transparency, accountability and respect for rights in legal systems.



Child Protection Policy in all Research

Aalborg University has introduced a new Child Protection Policy to guide staff and students working with children in research or study projects.

The policy clarifies procedures for interviews and data use, ensuring children's safety, rights and well-being are prioritised and supported by the university's Child Protection Office.

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

NUoS Principal Eugneiy Trushliakov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Ambassador Bent Egbjerg Mikkelsen (Photo: Embassy of Denmark in Ukraine)





17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

ERASMUS+ exchange in Namibia (Photo: still from video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqT63A0HGhE>)



Green Societies Hub

Green Societies is an interdisciplinary research hub at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) at Aalborg University (AAU), to strengthen research-based contributions to climate action, green transitions, and environmental sustainability. The hub fosters collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and governance levels.

Green Societies brings together researchers from across SSH and connects them with national and international research initiatives, networks, and stakeholders. Its core mission is to build a coordinated research environment that enables knowledge sharing, joint project development, and innovative approaches to complex sustainability challenges. Through workshops, seminars, podcasts, and networking activities, the hub actively facilitates dialogue and cooperation among academics, policymakers, practitioners, and societal actors.

From 2023 to 2025, the hub has received start-up funding to support its administration and to provide seed funding for collaborative research projects. By 2024, Green Societies included 94 SSH researchers as members and had awarded seed funding to a total of 18 interdisciplinary projects. These projects emphasize partnership-driven approaches to green transitions, focusing on policy development, justice, equity, decision-making processes, stakeholder cooperation, and cross-disciplinary knowledge integration—demonstrating how strategic partnerships are central to addressing sustainability challenges.

Erasmus+ Building Long-Term Academic Partnerships with Namibia

Aalborg University has significantly expanded its international education partnerships through strategic engagement with the EU's Erasmus+ programmes, prioritising enduring collaborations with higher education institutions across Europe and globally.

One standout example is AAU's long-term partnership with academic institutions in Namibia, particularly through initiatives supported by Erasmus+, where mobility and co-creation have strengthened mutual learning and cross-cultural exchange. Between 2023 and 2025, the Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology implemented an Erasmus+ mobility project that facilitated 20 staff exchanges to and from Namibia, deepening academic ties and shared innovation.

This collaboration has extended beyond traditional teaching and research: faculty and partners worked together to develop technological solutions, such as virtual reality applications, aimed at preserving cultural heritage while fostering innovation and research-based education. Projects like using VR to document and share indigenous cultural practices illustrate how international partnerships can produce practical, culturally sensitive outcomes that benefit communities on both continents.

UCCRN Nordic Node

The Urban Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN) is a global consortium of over 2,000 scientists, scholars, and practitioners from more than 150 cities. The Network's mission is to provide the knowledge that enables towns, cities and municipalities to lead on climate change mitigation and adaptation, with a focus on action, equity, and sustainable development.

Aalborg University leads the Network's Nordic Node (established in 2015). In 2024 and 2025, we jointly implemented with Danish and international UCCRN partners a wide range of research, education and engagement activities. This includes for example, three Urban Design Climate Workshops: one in Naples, Italy (March 2024); one in Aalborg, Denmark (in September 2024); and one in Davis, California (in April 2025). More than 75 European and international students participated along with 20 faculty.

Through the Nordic Node, AAU has been instrumental in UCCRN's work on the 3rd Assessment Report on Climate Change and Cities (ARC3.3), which will be published as 12 separate elements (three published as of 2025); our engagement is in particular on Planning, Urban Design, and Architecture for Climate Action; Circular Economies for Cities; Nature-Based Solutions: Enhancing Capacity to Respond to Shocks and Stresses; and Data and the Role of Technology.

We have as part of our work in the Nordic Node hosted visitors from UCCRN partners from India, US, Australia, Italy, France, the Netherlands, and Spain, and have also implemented student and staff mobility (funded mainly through Erasmus+ means) to these countries.

In September 2025, AAU was granted funding to co-develop (with UCCRN partners) a global City Solutions Case Study Atlas, which will serve as inspiration for climate action across scale, place and time in cities and communities across the world. It is our hope that the Atlas will be a repository for students and researchers interested in urban climate change and that we through this work can further action on the ground to tackle one of the greatest crises in front of us.

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

As a network university, AAU is a member of international networks and international collaborations that extend around the world. This map shows our international collaborations regarding projects and publications, 2021-2025 (Source: [AAU Research Portal](#))



About this report

This report constitutes only a small subset of the many initiatives AAU has embarked on in our efforts to contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Additional information on how Aalborg University engages with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in research, teaching, collaborations and operations can be found on the [AAU website](#).

The activities presented in this report have been identified and selected through comprehensive consultations with key stakeholders from the Faculty of Medicine, the Technical Faculty of IT and Design, the Faculty of Engineering and Science, the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Campus Service, AAU Innovation, the Rector's Office, Study Services, and AAU Communication and Public Affairs.

Publication data used in this report for the first 16 Sustainable Development Goals was extracted from SciVal using the predefined Research Areas in SciVal for the respective SDGs. The methodology used by SciVal to define the SDG Research Areas is the Elsevier 2023 SDG mapping¹. The search was limited to publications from 2019-2024, and data was extracted on 25 March 2025.

¹ Bedard-Vallee, Alexandre; James, Chris; Roberge, Guillaume (2023), "[Elsevier 2023 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) Mapping](#)", Elsevier Data Repository, V1, doi: 10.17632/y2zzy9vwzy.1



**AALBORG
UNIVERSITY**

Aalborg University
Fredrik Bajers Vej 7K
9100 Aalborg
Denmark

Phone: +45 9940 9940
E-mail: aa@aa.dk
www.en.aa.dk