

## TIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE, ENGAGED EXCHANGE

Going on exchange is an experience for life, but we should not ignore the fact that thousands of students travelling across the world each year has a serious environmental impact. We want to help you to make sustainable choices and engage meaningfully with your host destination. After all, you are now an ambassador for Tilburg University abroad!



### WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

The UN defines sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Making choices with minimal environmental consequences is crucial to guaranteeing safe living conditions for us and future generations. Curious about your impact on the environment? Check out the UN’s carbon footprint calculator.

## HOW CAN I BE SUSTAINABLE DURING MY EXCHANGE?

### THINK ABOUT HOW YOU TRAVEL

How you travel to and from your exchange destination is a key part of a sustainable exchange experience. Students usually fly, even to nearby countries, because of short flight times and cheap prices. But airplanes produce huge carbon emissions – check out this calculator to see how much CO<sub>2</sub> your flight to your host country would generate.



**Why not take the train instead?** There are many smooth and affordable train connections throughout Europe, as shown in Utrecht University’s handy map. Taking the train needn’t have a big impact on your travel time (your flight time might only be an hour, but you will likely spend several hours travelling to/from the airport and waiting at security, baggage and border control!). Travelling via train offers a rich experience and strengthens your European identity, as you get to see other cities and countries along the way.

Here are just a few examples of rail networks in Europe:

- NS International, connecting the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany and Switzerland
- Eurostar, connecting the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands
- RENFE, Spain’s vast rail network
- Night trains: Nightjet (Europe-wide), Caledonian (UK)

## MORE TRAVEL TIPS

The following websites are also great resources for planning sustainable journeys:



- [routeRANK](#)
- [EcoPassenger](#)
- [Rome2Rio](#)
- [HappyRail](#)
- [Interrail](#)
- [The Man in Seat 61](#)

Many students look forward to travelling to nearby cities and countries during their exchange. **Instead of heading straight to the budget airline websites, explore ways to do this via bus or train.** An Interrail ticket would be a great place to start!



For those feeling super committed to avoiding flying, **check out the [Flight Free pledge](#).** Pledge to give up flying for leisure reasons, or for a full year or even forever!

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

We understand that choosing an alternative mode of transport can come with a higher price tag. **Here's how we can help:** students going on exchange to an Erasmus+ destination (and who will therefore already receive the basic Erasmus+ grant) can apply for the [Erasmus+ Green Travel Grant](#) to help you cover the cost of a sustainable mode of travel.



## OTHER STEPS TO A SUSTAINABLE EXCHANGE

Not all destinations are reachable by train or bus, and the increased costs of sustainable travel may not be doable for everyone. But don't worry - **there are other ways to incorporate sustainable choices into your exchange.**

## OFFSET YOUR FLIGHT EMISSIONS

**You can donate to a cause that aims to take the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of your flight back out of the atmosphere** through, for example, planting trees or investing in renewable energy. [Offset schemes are definitely no magic fix](#), but may still be a good place to start when thinking about reducing your exchange's environmental impact.



## DONATE YOUR THINGS BEFORE YOU LEAVE!

For those of you clearing out your belongings before going on exchange, please consider donating your household goods to the next generation of TiU students. At the end of each semester, we host a 'Sharing is Caring' event, where you can drop off donations which will later be collected by new international students who arrive in Tilburg for their exchange. Keep your eyes on our Canvas and social media pages for more information about upcoming editions!

## SHOP SECOND-HAND

You'll likely want to spruce up your new bedroom, or maybe you need some new clothes suited to your host country's climate. **Check out thrift stores, flea markets and Facebook Marketplace to give new life to second-hand items instead of contributing to the demand for new products** which can be damaging to the environment – did you know that the fashion industry is responsible for up to 10% of global carbon emissions?!



At the end of your exchange, you might have acquired more things than can fit into your suitcase again, but **don't throw them away!** Sell them or donate them back to second-hand stores or local donation drives to give them a new home.

## EXPLORE PLANT-BASED AND LOCALLY GROWN FOOD



Transitioning to a more plant-based diet is said to be the single biggest way that we as individuals can reduce our impact on the environment. Vegetarian and vegan options are becoming increasingly accessible throughout Europe – Happy Cow is a handy tool for finding vegetarian and vegan eateries in your local area.

Many food products from mainstream supermarkets travels thousands of miles before they reach our plate. **Buying locally sourced food can reduce the carbon footprint or so-called “food miles” of our diet, as well as supporting local businesses and farmers.** Check out local markets or green grocers – they are often cheaper than supermarkets, too! You can even try growing some of your own food – there plenty of fruits and veggies that can be grown in small containers by your window or on a balcony!

## CHECK RECYCLING AND WASTE DISPOSAL RULES



**Find out how the local recycling and waste disposal systems work to make sure as little trash as possible ends up in landfills and waterways.** Ask local students, employees at your accommodation or the International Office at your host university if you need help understanding the local rules.

**And why not explore ways to reduce your waste altogether?** Heading to the local market is a great way to explore your new home, and you can often find fresh produce without plastic packaging. So-called bulk or zero waste stores, where you can buy groceries and household products without packaging, are also popping up all over Europe.

## CHOOSE A SUSTAINABLE BANK



You might want to open a bank account, especially if your host country doesn't use the Euro. **However, many major banks use your money to make huge investments in fossil fuel industries.** Use Bank Green to see how different banks in your host country score in their commitment to sustainability, and open an account at a bank with a good rating instead of one of the big polluters.