
Funding a zero-carbon campus

How public funding turned a strategic orientation into institutional capacity

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A large multi-site university with a real footprint to decarbonise



43,000
students



850
academics & researchers



220
PhD students



8
sites in France



Largest private non-for-profit (EESPIG) university in France · 5 faculties (humanities, economics & sciences, law, health) · 2 engineering schools · 2 business schools · 3 hospitals and 5 care homes
A historic campus in the heart of the city of Lille

Live TREE program : More than a decade dedicated to energy, ecological and social transition

Live TREE : includes 15 years of turning our campuses into living labs: testing solutions on site to cut our carbon footprint and address the wider ecological and societal transition together.

2013

Live TREE launched

real estate renovation and construction projects.

2021

Lille low-carbon pact

Signed with more than 100 city partners in planning, construction and renovation

2022

Commitment to Students & stakeholders

- Grenoble Agreement
- Label EURACLIMAT
- University Convention for Climate - A democratic experiment: 150 students, University staff members and local residents

Ongoing

Carbon Trajectory Committee

Assess the University's contribution to global warming through a carbon footprint assessment (8sites), and set a carbon trajectory consistent with our growth

A strategic orientation: towards a carbon-neutral campus

1

Ambition (2013)

LIVE TREE : A carbon-neutral campus set as a strategic orientation of the university, not a one-off project.
Aligned with the Hauts-de-France regional strategy

2

Project initiation

- Focus on the historic campus of Lille: Energy performance of buildings, smart grid, on-site renewable production
- Multidisciplinary framework for research and teaching

3

Funding approach

Building a funding strategy and identifying relevant calls for proposals according to planned actions, creating synergy between the different funding programs

A trajectory in three stages: from strategy to campus-scale deployment

1

Structure

Strategic orientation adopted;

Funding team and governance aligned around the carbon-neutral objective.

2

Demonstration

- smart buildings
- a smart grid platform,
- 1,600 m² of photovoltaic panels
- Vehicle charging service
- energy performance of buildings



3

Roll-out

- Raising awareness among students, faculty, and administrative staff about energy, ecological, and societal transition
- Creating a university degree program dedicated to energy, ecological, and societal transition
- Encouraging student involvement in projects that serve the public interest
- Supporting interdisciplinary research and pedagogical initiatives through national and European funding

Public funding mobilised: regional and European support

Demonstrators & equipment



ERDF
Hauts de France

2



€ 5M

2015-2020

Smart Building,
smart grid...

Hauts-de-France Region



€ 2,3 M

2016-2018

ERDF

Energy efficiency
& PV Panels

European Union



Public funding mobilised: national and European support

Collaborative research project

Innovation Action – H2020 & H EUROPE

ADEME : national funding

3



2020-2024

€ 482,000

Ebalance+ :



Horizon Europe

Smart grid, energy market and flexibility

Ebalance+
Smartgrids européens
2020 – 2023



ebalanceplus

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement N° 864283



2023-2025

€ 143,000

INCLU'UNIV

User acceptance and Engagement in Smart Buildings



National Energy Management Agency



Public funding mobilised: European support

Applied research & best
practices

Enterprise Chair : local
funding

Life : European funding

3

JUWIA
UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE
DE LIÈGE

2017-2021



Lille Urban
Community

€ 300,000

Smart Building Chair:

Optimizing energy
efficiency and user
comfort

2019-2023



LIFE

JUWIA
UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE
DE LIÈGE

€ 143,000

Life MAPEREN

Building Energy
Performance
Management



Public funding mobilised: national support



Research and Education

National fund : France 2030
(NextGenerationEU)

3

2023-2031



€ 300,000
EURO-TELL:

New EUROpean Experiential and Transition based Learning ModEL



Strategic Hub
Industry of the future for a positive impact on the environment and humanity
Automation, digitization, and industrial innovations for more efficient and sustainable production



Strategic Hub
Humanly Smart City, Territories and Mobility

*sustainable mobility
smart infrastructure
optimizing land use for smarter urban development*



Lessons learnt and questions for the audience

Success factors

1. Strategy first, then funding sought in consequence
2. Concrete results, obtaining projects builds credibility
3. A dedicated funding team

Challenges

1. Co-financing and multi-year financing plan
2. Reporting rules across regional, national and EU funds

Transferability

1. Combine regional, national and EU programs
2. Share best practices with other institutions
3. Monitor the use of public funds and the impact of our projects in regard to the university's transformation

For discussion

How do you turn a one-off project grant into lasting institutional capacity?