
GUIDELINE FOR ECO-FRIENDLY BUSINESS TRIPS

OF 15 DECEMBER 2022

Preamble

Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf is aware of its responsibility to society as a whole with regard to sustainable development. In order to develop the University in a sustainable way in line with the agreement on objectives concluded between the Universities in North Rhine-Westphalia and the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of NRW (*Hochschulvereinbarung NRW 2026*) and achieve the goal of climate neutrality set out in the University Development Plan 20.26, all employees and civil servants at HHU are called upon to align the planning and conduct of their business trips to the principles of sustainable mobility.

This means in particular that the additional traffic volume incurred by business trips should be reduced by critically reviewing in advance of each trip whether it can be avoided or whether modern means of communication can be utilised as a substitute. Where business trips are still deemed necessary, eco-friendly public transport should be used for the outward and return journeys as far as possible. Flights to destinations within Europe should be avoided as far as possible and certain connections are explicitly excluded under normal circumstances by this Guideline. When selecting the means of transport, meeting sustainability targets shall in principle take precedence over other work-related – and in particular fiscal – considerations. Nevertheless, any resultant additional costs must be proportionate to the achievement of climate and environmental protection objectives.

Art. 1 General business trip approval

- (1) The Rectorate hereby grants civil servants and employees of Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (excl. the Faculty of Medicine) general approval
 - a) for business trips up to two days long and
 - b) for business trips, irrespective of their duration, insofar as they are realised exclusively via the following means of transport:
Train, bus, urban public transport system, bicycle
- (2) The business trip approval applies for the completion of official business related to duties within the working area of the person undertaking the trip. Employees generally remain obligated to inform their direct supervisors in advance about upcoming business trips and gain their approval. Supervisors must ensure that sufficient budget funds are available. In justified cases, the general business trip approval may be revoked for individual employees.
- (3) An application for approval must be submitted for business trips not covered by this general approval.

An application for approval must also be submitted for business trips where, before the start of the trip,

- a) an advance should be granted on the expected travel expense compensation or
- b) third-party invoices are to be paid in advance by HHU (e.g. conference fees, hotel costs) or
- c) train or flight tickets are ordered from the official HHU travel agency.

Applications for business trip approval and the reimbursement of travel expenses must be submitted via the business travel portal.

- (4) In the event that a business trip which has been generally approved on the basis of Art. 1, point 1 b) is unavoidably disrupted (e.g. by a significantly delayed train) and, according to the best judgement of the traveller, this disruption requires the business trip to be continued using other means of transport (e.g. taxi, hire car), these costs shall also be reimbursed as travel expenses to the extent necessary.

Art. 2 Regulations for the conduct of business trips, selection of means of transport

- (1) Business trips should only be conducted where they are essential for business reasons and more cost-effective realisation of the business, in particular via digital means of communication, is not possible or expedient. They must be realised cost-effectively and limited to the shortest possible period of time. The cheapest reasonable transport connections should therefore generally be selected. In addition to the principle of economy, travellers should also take particular account of climate protection aspects when selecting the means of transport. Where travellers decide to travel by train for environmental reasons, the necessary costs shall be reimbursed even if they are higher. In addition to the actual travel costs, higher costs may also be incurred in particular through the need for additional accommodation/daily allowances.
- (2) In order to achieve the HHU climate and environmental targets, air travel is generally prohibited for business trips to destinations within a 500 km radius of the traveller's place of work and within continental Europe. This also applies in particular where a flight would be expedient for business reasons, e.g. due to timing/deadlines, or for economic reasons, e.g. lower costs than for rail travel or a possible gain in working time. In the event that travellers select a means of transport other than that stipulated, they shall be liable for the additional costs incurred.
- (3) Taking flights to the destinations stated under point 2 may be permitted in exceptional cases contrary to the regulations set out under point 2 where
- a) flights would significantly reduce the duration of the business trip and thus enable essential family obligations (necessary care of children or close relatives who live in the same household as the traveller) to be realised more easily and no alternative to care by the traveller is available or
 - b) the traveller has health impairments (proof of severe disability with a degree of disability of at least 50% and one of the following categories: G (mobility impairment), aG (severe mobility impairment), GI (deaf), BI (blind), Tbl (deaf-blind) or H (requiring constant care), or mobility restrictions) that make travel by rail or bus unreasonable.

Travellers must declare the applicability of at least one of these criteria when applying for the reimbursement of flight costs. The functional supervisor shall decide whether to grant an exception, taking account of business needs/duty of care requirements and observing the principle of proportionality. In the case of professors, the relevant Dean shall be responsible for taking this decision rather than the functional supervisor.

Art. 3 Compensation payments for air travel

- (1) Unavoidable emissions generated in the course of air travel must be compensated. This compensation shall be paid into a university climate protection fund.
- (2) The compensation shall take the form of flat-rate amounts based on distance categories. The HCSD defines the flat-rate amounts, reviews them on an annual basis taking account of price developments on the global carbon market and modifies them where necessary. The compensation amounts shall be paid from the budget funds of the organisational unit in which the business trip was undertaken. Travellers are responsible for arranging the transfer of budget funds to the university climate protection fund.
- (3) For business trips financed by third-party funds where the corresponding third-party funding provider offers the opportunity to make compensation payments (e.g. German Research Foundation), the payments shall be made in accordance with the procedure defined by the third-party funding provider. Where third-party funding providers do not offer the opportunity to make compensation payments, the compensation amount shall be paid into the university climate protection fund from the budget funds of the organisational unit in which the business trip was undertaken.

Art. 4 Entry into force

This Guideline shall enter into force on 1 January 2023.

Issued on the basis of the resolution of the Rectorate of Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf dated 15 December 2022.