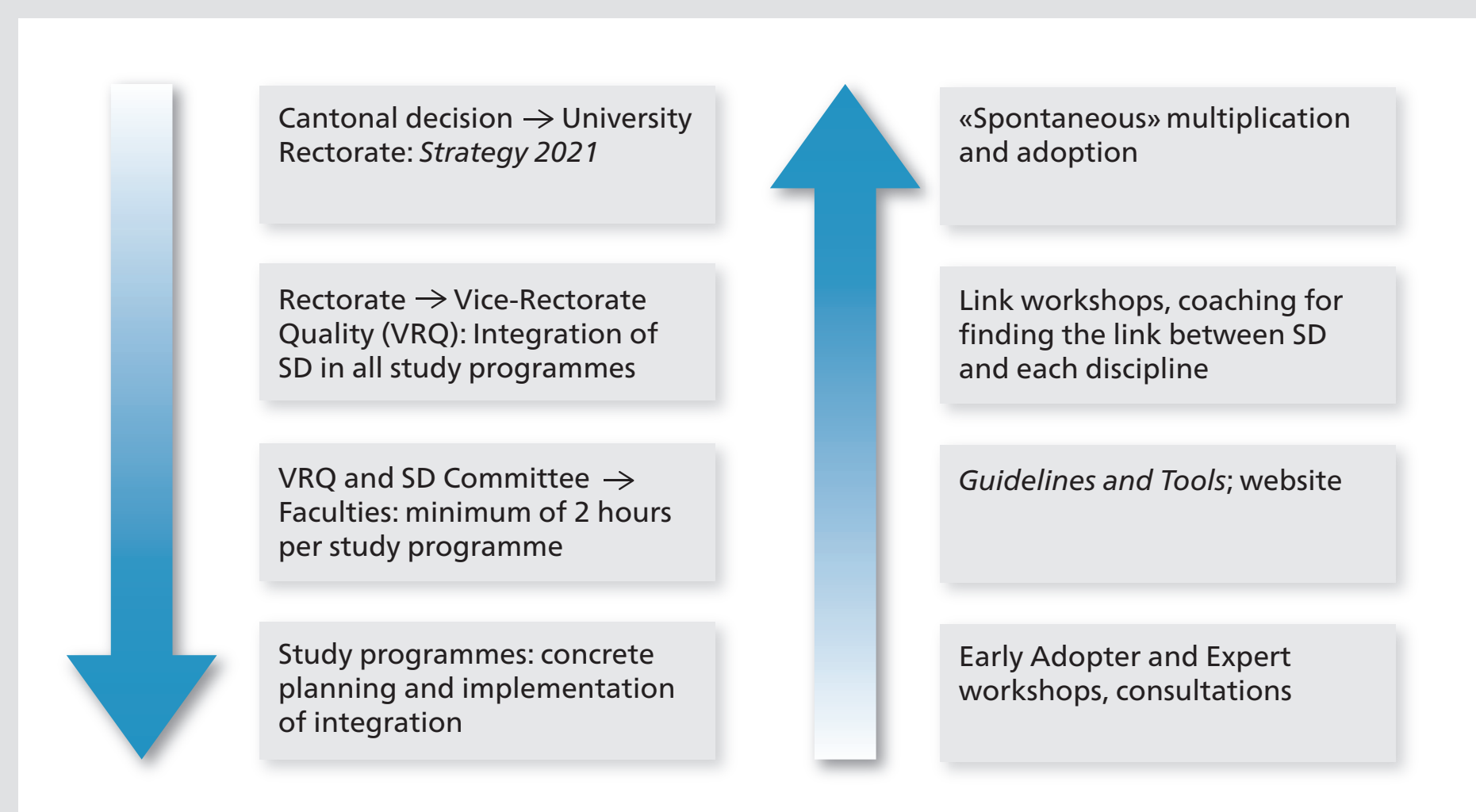


How to Integrate Sustainable Development in Higher Education: The Example of the University of Bern

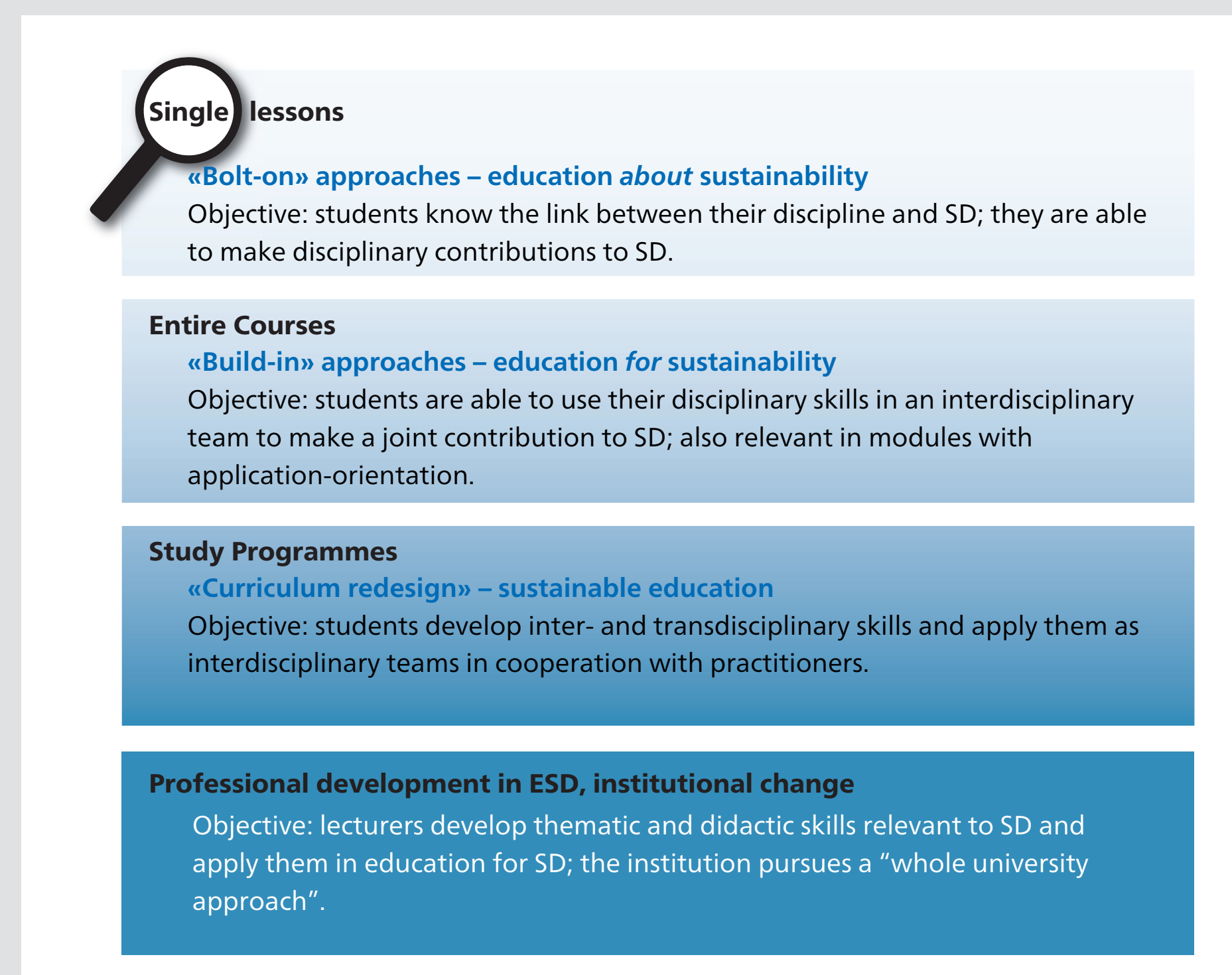


In its Strategy 2021, the University of Bern set itself the goal of promoting sustainable development in research, teaching, and operations. In teaching, this means among other things that all students should have the opportunity to discover links between their main discipline and sustainable development at least once in the course of their studies.

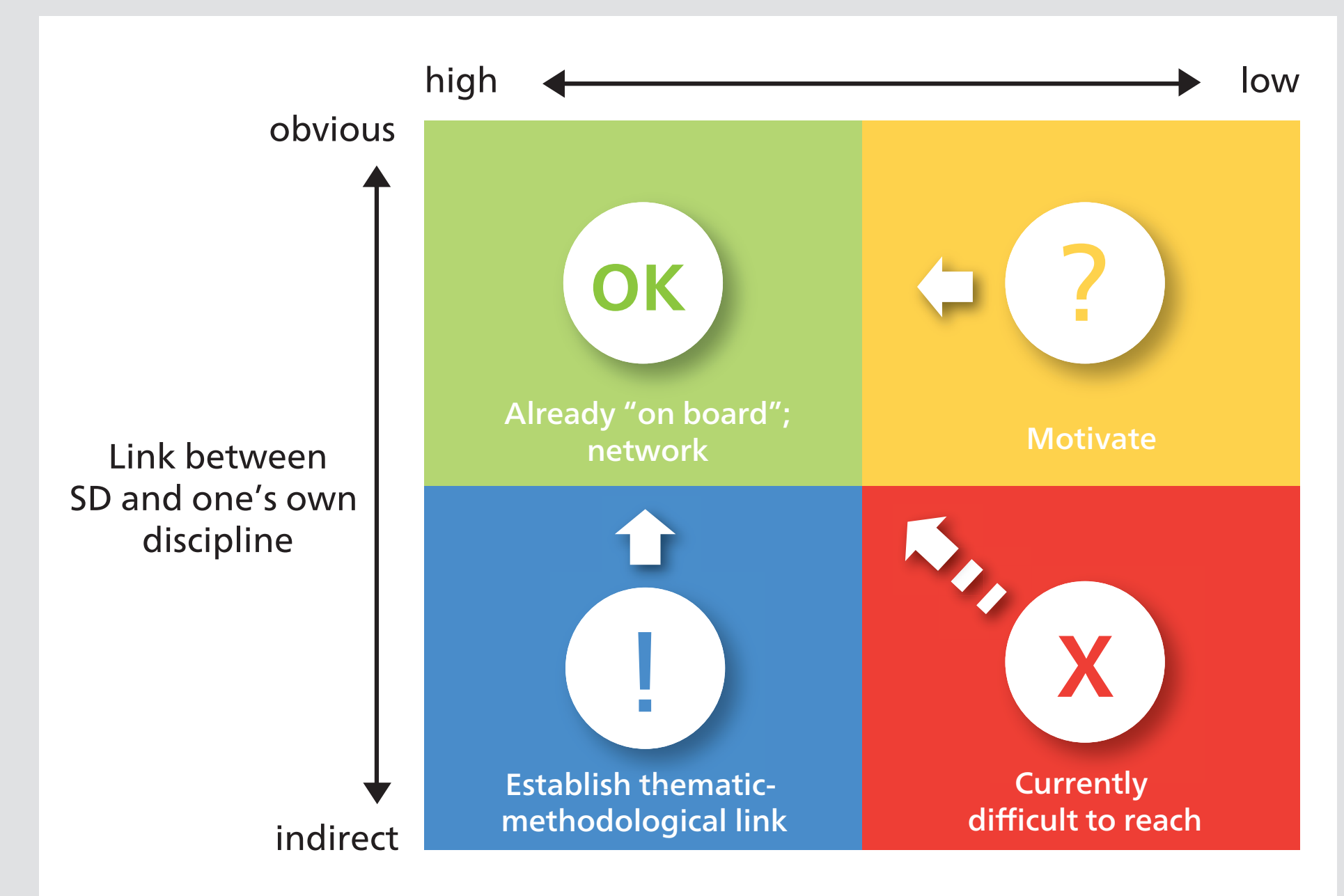
The University receives its mandate from the Canton of Bern: Integration of sustainable development (SD) in its strategy is thus required by the state. To implement this requirement, the University adopted a combined top-down and bottom-up strategy. Moreover, to integrate SD in teaching across all faculties, it chose to ask those in charge of curricula to identify how their discipline could contribute to SD and to illustrate this in one two-hour session in each bachelor programme. Finally, as academic freedom is a fundamental principle, the University chose to set priorities when targeting disciplines. The process of integration remains ongoing.



Combined top-down and bottom-up approach.



By decision from the Rectorate, sustainable development must be addressed in each bachelor programme in at least one two-hour lecture.



Integration is pursued by targeting groups in a differentiated and progressive way. To complement options offered by bachelor programmes, every student can take a two-hour online tutorial.

Programmes explicitly dedicated to sustainable development



Sustainable development in operations

Since 2013, the University of Bern has held the label of a Blue University. This label is awarded by the Canadian NGO “Council of Canadians”. As a Blue University, the University acknowledges the right to water; it also ensures that water is used sustainably and that water distribution and use remain public. In addition, it encourages climate neutrality, especially with regard to travelling.

Components of sustainable development programmes

- Interdisciplinary modules and group work that enable students to develop a systemic approach, take into account the inherently uncertain and inaccurate nature of knowledge in SD challenges, and recognize their epistemological and ontological limitations
- Transdisciplinary modules with societal actors, dedicated to negotiating concrete values related to SD and to co-creating knowledge and transformative solutions

Further aspects

The University uses electricity from renewable sources (with CO₂ compensation through the Canton of Bern). In 2017, only 0.27% of the electricity consumed had no sustainability certificate. By comparison with the University's total energy needs, the proportion of electricity from renewable sources amounts to 53%.

The cafeterias follow principles of SD. Among others, they use regional, seasonal, and fair-trade products; and try to reduce waste to a minimum.

Sustainable development programmes available at the University of Bern

- Bachelor Minor in sustainable development
- Master Minor in sustainable development
- Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in sustainable development
- International Graduate School (IGS) North-South: inter-university curriculum for a certificate in sustainable development
- Continuing professional educational development in SD (workshop)

The University has several research centres with a strong focus on SD

- Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)
- Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research (OCCR)
- World Trade Institute (WTI)
- Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für Geschlechterforschung (IZFG)