



# Travel Policy of the University of Bern

## Guidelines for Sustainable Business Trips at the University of Bern

Published: December 8, 2020

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## 1. Fundamentals of the Travel Policy

The University of Bern takes the principles of sustainable development into account in research and teaching as well as in its administrative and operational areas. Climate protection is one of the University's concerns not only in research, but also in operations and business travel. Greenhouse gas emissions, which result in particular from air travel, contribute significantly to the University's carbon footprint and are thus a particular focus of attention.

This Travel Policy summarizes the most important specifications regarding business travel in general and the consideration of sustainability in particular. These can be found in detail in the following documents:

- **“Personnel Regulations of the Canton of Bern”**, or Cantonal PR for short<sup>1</sup>
- **“Regulations on expenses and representation costs”**<sup>2</sup> of the University of Bern, or Expenses regulations for short
- **“Traffic light system for University business trips”** of the University of Bern: train not plane for European travel destinations, categorized by traffic light colors, in short traffic light system.
- Information leaflet **“Traveling sustainably”**: guidelines, recommendations and useful tips for business trips at the University of Bern

### **Area of application**

The Travel Policy applies to all employees of the University of Bern. It thus also applies to associated persons within the meaning of Art. 3 of the Expenses regulations<sup>3</sup> and to students at the University of Bern.

### **Basic information**

The specifications of the Cantonal PR as well as the Expenses regulations and the “Traffic light system for University business trips” of the University of Bern form the legal basis for the Travel Policy. Important objectives of the Travel Policy are cost efficiency and consideration of sustainability: Both can be optimized with good travel planning. The most important provisions:

1. Employees are obliged to keep their expenses and those of associated persons as low as possible. They minimize their work-related expenses with expedient planning and execution of work away from home.<sup>4</sup>
  - **Recommendation**: Cost reduction can be achieved, for example, by optimizing travel time and combining different activities.
2. Public transport should be used first and foremost for business trips.<sup>5</sup>
3. The use of private or university motor vehicles may be authorized if considerable time or costs would be saved or if the use of a motor vehicle is more practical for business reasons.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PR of the Canton of Bern, in particular the clauses on reimbursement of expenses 5.3.1 thru 5.3.3

<sup>2</sup> “Regulations on expenses and representation costs” of the University of Bern

<sup>3</sup> Expenses regulations, Art. 3: *“Associated persons are persons who contribute to the fulfillment of the duties of the respective institution, such as visiting researchers and scholarship holders.”*

<sup>4</sup> Art. 6, para. 1 Expenses regulations

<sup>5</sup> Art. 10, para. 1 Expenses regulations

<sup>6</sup> Art. 10, para. 2 Expenses regulations

- Please note: The University of Bern has special conditions with the company Mobility Car sharing.<sup>7</sup> Car sharing is more sustainable than owning your own vehicle.
- 4. Air travel is to be limited to what is absolutely necessary.<sup>8</sup>

The following is a summary of the specifications that must be taken into account when planning and booking business trips.

## 2. Means of transport

### Train travel<sup>9</sup>

1. The corresponding costs of tickets will be reimbursed when using public transport.
2. If the cost of travel on public transport can be reduced by using multiple-ride tickets, one-way tickets may not be charged. If the cost of travel on public transport can be reduced by using monthly, annual, half-fare or general season tickets, the cost of these tickets may be covered in whole or in part. Institutions shall ensure that the most cost-effective option is selected and shall document this accordingly.
3. Employees classified in salary grades 19 to 30 may charge for **1st class** tickets when traveling by train or ship. Employees in lower salary grades who are accompanying them are also entitled to travel 1st class.
4. When booking train travel within Switzerland, please use the SBB-Business-Travel tool. This reduces administration and allows university units to receive discounts on ticket prices. With SBB Businessstravel, institutions can purchase SBB tickets online and receive a monthly invoice.

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<sup>7</sup> For more details go to:  
[https://www.unibe.ch/university/campus\\_and\\_infrastructure/living\\_in\\_bern/car\\_sharing/index\\_eng.htm](https://www.unibe.ch/university/campus_and_infrastructure/living_in_bern/car_sharing/index_eng.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Art. 17, para. 1 Expenses regulations

<sup>9</sup> Art. 12, Expenses regulations

## Rental vehicles and cab rides

1. Institutions may enter into contracts with vehicle rental companies for the use of vehicles for official needs.<sup>10</sup>
  - Please note: The University of Bern has a global framework agreement with Europcar. University units (employees) benefit from special rates (10% discount) on vehicle rental.
  - Recommendation: Using rental vehicles for business trips should be avoided as high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions levels are caused per person. If rental vehicles are used, they are to be used efficiently in terms of capacity utilization, size and motorization.
2. It is not permitted to use rental vehicles for private purposes for insurance reasons.<sup>11</sup>
3. Charges for cab rides are generally only reimbursed when used abroad. In Switzerland, costs for cab rides are only reimbursed by the University if they were absolutely necessary in the case in question. In this case, a written justification and approval from the supervisor is required.<sup>12</sup>

## Air travel, ticket costs, CO<sub>2</sub> compensation payments

1. Air travel is to be limited to what is absolutely necessary.<sup>13</sup>
2. In the case of air travel, the costs of economy class are reimbursed from basic funding and third-party grants of the service providers in accordance with the target agreement. Economy plus flights are permitted on intercontinental routes. In the case of external funding, the specifications of the sponsors (SNSF, Innosuisse, EU, NIH, etc.) also apply. In the case of unrestricted external funding, business flights are only admissible in intercontinental traffic.<sup>14</sup>
3. The University of Bern has guidelines specifying which destinations within Europe should be traveled to by train or plane. The relevant specifications are listed in the **“Traffic light system for University business trips”**:
  - a. **Green**: Train travel is mandatory.
  - b. **Yellow**: In the yellow category, travel by train must take precedence over travel by plane. If, however, the plane is used, a justification is required: For destinations within the yellow category, superiors can (in exceptional cases) authorize air travel instead of train travel. Acceptable reasons are, in particular, the compatibility of care tasks and work, possible

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<sup>10</sup> Art. 16, para. 1 Expenses regulations

<sup>11</sup> Art. 16, para. 2 Expenses regulations

<sup>12</sup> Art. 18, Expenses regulations

<sup>13</sup> Art. 17, para. 1 Expenses regulations

<sup>14</sup> Art. 17, para. 2 Expenses regulations

health impairments of the person traveling as well as mandatory operational requirements.

- c. **Red:** Flights in the red category are virtually impossible to avoid. Night trains<sup>15</sup> from Switzerland to various European cities, such as Berlin, Hamburg and Vienna (yellow category) as well as Graz, Prague and Zagreb (red category), are acceptable alternatives. The use of night trains is recommended but not mandatory.
  - *Please note:* A list of university-relevant travel destinations within Europe, marked according to the traffic light criteria, can be found in the document “Traffic light system for University business trips”. The list is not exhaustive and will be updated once a year.
4. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from air travel must always be compensated. They are determined **centrally** by the University and compensated by it in an appropriate manner.
5. Mileage credits, bonus points, awards and the like credited to employees by airlines on the occasion of business travel shall be used to fulfill the institution’s performance mandate.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Food and accommodation

1. Bed and breakfast is reimbursed. The costs of middle-class accommodation are compensated in the case of basic funding and third-party grants of the service providers in accordance with the target agreement. Middle-class accommodation is classed to be a three-star hotel. In the case of external funding, the specifications of the sponsors (SNSF, EU, NIH, etc.) also apply. In the case of unrestricted external funding, a moderate but by no means luxurious standard is possible.<sup>17</sup>
  - *Recommendation:* When choosing accommodation, please take into consideration the sustainability and climate friendliness of the hotel.
  - *Recommendation:* In the interests of cost efficiency, choose accommodation near the off-site work location to avoid unnecessary transport costs.
2. If an employee has to have a main meal away from home for official reasons, the employee is entitled to compensation. If an assignment is to be completed at the place of work or within a radius of up to ten kilometers, compensation shall only be paid if the costs of meals have been incurred for official reasons. The same applies if the destination of the business trip is the employee’s place of residence.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For more information on traveling by night train, take a look at the [SBB](#) website or directly at [Nightjet](#).

<sup>16</sup> Art. 17, para. 4 Expenses regulations

<sup>17</sup> Art. 8, para. 1, Art. 9, paras.1-2 Expenses Regulation

<sup>18</sup> Art. 8, para. 1 Expenses regulations

#### **4. Booking business trips**

1. Bookings for business travel abroad must be made through the University travel office.
2. When booking train travel within Switzerland, please use the SBB Businesstravel tool. This reduces administration and allows university units to receive discounts on ticket prices. With SBB Businesstravel, institutions can purchase SBB tickets online and receive a monthly invoice.