

This guidance document is aimed at assisting beneficiaries and researchers supported by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. It is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to replace the consultation of any applicable legal sources. The European Commission (or any person acting on its behalf) cannot be held responsible for the use made of this guidance document.

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Green Charter

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) fund bottom-up research in all fields of science and across disciplines, based on scientific excellence and competitive funding. The programme supports the careers, skills development, and international mobility of researchers at all stages of their careers, with a strong focus on the development of excellent doctoral and post-doctoral research and training programmes. It is open to both academic and non-academic organisations and to researchers from all over the world.

The European Commission is committed to tackling climate, environmental and biodiversity challenges, in line with the EU Green Deal¹, the United Nation's 2030 Agenda² and the Sustainable Development Goals³. As an organisation, the European Commission is also determined to act as a front-runner in the transition towards a climate neutral society, by setting out an ambitious and realistic plan to achieve climate neutrality by 2030⁴. In light of the role of the MSCA programme supporting the future generations of researchers at the highest level, the MSCA Green Charter lays down a set of non-binding guiding principles that promotes the mainstreaming of

environmental considerations in all aspects of research planning and implementation, throughout the life cycle of a project. The Charter seeks to help reduce environmental harm caused or induced by MSCA-funded projects, to raise awareness of environmental sustainability, and to serve as a catalyst in promoting sustainable practices in research.

All participants in MSCA-funded projects are encouraged to adhere to the principles of the Charter as much as they can without compromising the scientific excellence of their project, nor their freedom to choose what to investigate in a bottom-up manner. These principles are relevant for researchers and research managers as well as to research groups, organisations and consortia, each of them having their own part to play to ensure research is performed sustainably⁵. These principles do not constitute an exhaustive list. They should always be read in accordance with the latest legal developments, findings, guidance documents, recommendations and best practices from the sector on the environmental sustainability of research activities.

1 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The European Green Deal (COM(2019) 640 final): <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX-52019DC0640>

2 United Nations, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

3 United Nations. The 17 goals: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

4 Greening the European Commission: https://commission.europa.eu/about/service-standards-and-principles/modernising-european-commission/greening-european-commission_en

5 More specific recommendations and best practice examples for researchers, research managers, research groups, organisations and consortia are provided as part of the MSCA Green Charter guidance material. Please see <https://marie-skłodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/about-msca/msca-green-charter>

Guiding principles for the conduct of sustainable research



Mainstreaming sustainability in research

Seek to avoid environmental harm and integrate environmental sustainability considerations throughout the project lifecycle and in all relevant aspects of the project's implementation, from project design, materials sourcing, procurement and infrastructure use, to dissemination, reuse and valorisation of research outputs. Find ways to assess impacts and monitor progress to guide future decisions on the environmental sustainability of the project's activities.



Resources

Use or promote the use of renewable, non-fossil fuel energy sources where feasible. Monitor and seek to reduce the consumption of energy, water and other resources in the context of the project.



Waste and harmful substances

Where possible, reduce reliance on single-use plastics and prevent or minimise the production of waste and harmful substances. Reduce, sort, reuse and recycle any waste unavoidably produced because of the project. Sustainable circular procurement practices and circular and sharing economy principles should be encouraged in the whole project design process. Encourage product-service systems (e.g., leasing lab equipment), modular and repairable designs, and closed-loop systems that minimise waste and facilitate recovery of value from by-products.



Harmful emissions

Prevent or minimise the production of harmful emissions, including greenhouse gases, resulting from the project's implementation.



Natural systems and biodiversity

Limit disturbances caused by the project activities on natural systems as well as harm caused to biodiversity. Explore the integration of nature-based solutions in project design and implementation, emphasizing the preservation and restoration of ecosystems to mitigate climate impacts.



Collaborative practices

Where appropriate, consider adopting or supporting collaborative practices to reduce the environmental impact of the research project, such as sharing research infrastructures, using or allowing for the use of secondary data, as well as innovative access models. Collaborative partnerships should also seek to explore circular synergies, such as shared use of consumables, joint procurement schemes for reusable materials, and shared logistics to reduce redundant waste and resource use.



Leveraging digital technologies

Consider the potential – and limitations – of digital technologies in promoting environmental sustainability in the organisation, management and conduct of research.



Hardware, software and data

Prefer the use of energy-efficient hardware and software solutions and practices, the use of low-power devices to reduce energy consumption during the project implementation, as well as circular economy practices such as device-as-a-service models. When not otherwise required, critically evaluate the necessity of long-term storage of digital material (such as data or images).



Travel

Prioritise low carbon forms of transportation for all project-related travel, including commuting, where possible and reasonable. When it is advantageous or necessary to travel, try to combine different activities (e.g. meetings, training, study visits...), possibly over a longer stay rather than multiplying trips. Employ teleconferencing tools when feasible as an alternative to physical attendance where such attendance is not necessary nor sufficiently advantageous.



Events

Ensure that all project-related events for which physical attendance is necessary are organised with sustainability considerations integrated into relevant decisions relating, for instance, to the number and duration of events, location, travel arrangements, accommodation, catering, and handouts. Event organisers should consider circular event planning principles, such as eliminating single-use items, renting reusable materials, sourcing local and seasonal catering with minimal packaging, and setting up waste sorting and composting systems.



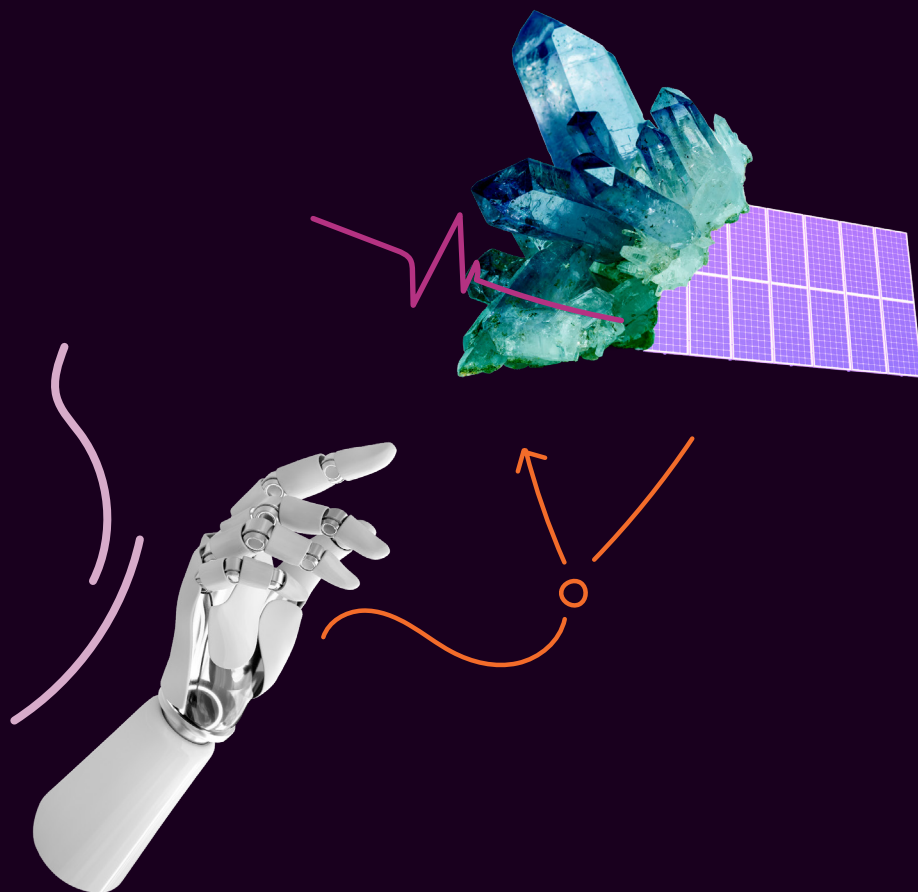
Support behavioural change

Adopt and promote behavioural change in the project's research community towards more environmentally sustainable practices, for instance by sharing information and guidance, or by taking or providing trainings as well as awareness-raising opportunities. Encourage involvement and identify, assume or distribute responsibilities to ensure every participant appropriately contributes to the environmental sustainability of the project. Foster the visibility and recognition of these contributions.



Share solutions with the wider research community

Promote the sharing of sustainability data, methodologies, and results across the research community and beyond, including through publications, ensuring that research outputs are open, accessible, and usable by others aiming to improve environmental sustainability.



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