eco-union's GREEN TRAVEL POLICY
A journey towards sustainability

Updated: January 2023

Applicability scope

This travel policy shall apply to **eco-union**'s team and collaborators.

Objective

Reduce travel-related CO2 equivalent emissions, in order to decrease eco-union's climate footprint and become a net-zero organisation.

Principles behind a Green Travel policy

The European Union (EU) is committed to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. For this reason, the European Commission has put forward the Fit for 55 package, which aims to **reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030** in line with the European 2030 Climate Target Plan and the Paris agreement.

Transport is one of the main sources of greenhouse gas emissions globally. In the European Union, it generates more than a quarter of total greenhouse gas emissions. In the case of Spain, in 2019, mobility-related emissions accounted for 29% of the total, with transportation being the sector that generated the most GHGs.

In this context, the impact of **air travel** is particularly harmful. It is —by large— the means of transport with the highest emissions in terms of passenger/km. Apart from the contribution of air transport to global warming, between 5% and 8%, aviation causes serious environmental problems (land-use, destruction of ecosystems), social problems (health problems, displacement of communities) and economic issues (tax privileges, hidden subsidies).

Car travel also has a big footprint. At EU level, cars are responsible for 61% of all transport emissions. Cars' pollution also affects humans' health, causing them a number of diseases. In addition, it is the mode of transportation with the highest mortality rate. The production and destruction of cars, as well as road building, have a big impact on emissions and wildlife. Moreover, the extraction and shipping of fuels also raise environmental red flags.

We recognise the importance of the above-mentioned problems, and therefore, the need to minimise as far as possible the impact of national and international travel resulting from its activities. To this end, we defend **sustainable mobility** and the **modal shift** from carbon-intensive means of passenger transport (aviation, individual car) towards **low-carbon transport** (rail) for medium and long distance travels.

By adopting this **Green Travel Policy,** we aim to be proactive and transparent in our objective to reduce climate emissions associated with the mobility of our staff, collaborators, suppliers, visitors, value chain and stakeholders. Furthermore, through the implementation of these guidelines, we want to help create a fairer and more sustainable transport system from a social, environmental and economic point of view.

Our commitments

By issuing this Green Travel Policy, we commit ourselves to:

- **Implementing a short (2030) and long-term (2050) strategy** aimed at significantly and sustainably reducing climate emissions related to its staff, collaborators, suppliers and visitors trips.

- **Providing the necessary tools, procedures and resources** to facilitate the choice and use of sustainable means of transport for their trips, as well as to systematically monitoring and calculating the emissions generated by such journeys.

- **Using emissions records and the analysis of their evolution** as a tool to raise awareness among the organisation's staff about the social and environmental impact of their trips, and as a motivation tool to progressively reduce this impact.

- **Playing a proactive role in raising awareness among other stakeholders** —social, economic, institutional, etc.— about the socio-environmental impacts of the most polluting means of transport, especially aviation.

- **Actively promoting public and private sustainable transportation policies** which aim to reduce the number of trips and prioritise the most sustainable means of transport.

Key areas of action for the implementation of the Green Travel Policy

The implementation of the above commitments will revolve around the following areas of action:

a. Planning and Monitoring of the Reduction of Travel Emissions

- Following the approval of this Green Travel Policy, we will make a list of the trips made during the year and their associated emissions. This list will serve as a baseline against which to set corresponding emission reduction targets.

- We will create a tool for the collection of data about emissions related to the trips made by its staff. This tool will be available to inform and raise awareness about the emissions generated by the organisation's trips. While doing so, we commit to respect confidentiality criteria regarding the details of the people who make the trips.

- On an annual basis, an assessment of the previous year's emissions will be carried out and the corresponding targets for the following year(s) will be set.

- For the sake of transparency and to encourage others stakeholders, we will make public both this travel policy and the travel and emissions inventory of the current year, as well as the emissions generated in subsequent years.

b. Adoption of criteria to reduce emissions from our trips

- Priority will be given to events (meetings, workshops, seminars, etc.) that can be carried out virtually, without the need for physical travel. In cases where travelling is unavoidable, activities and locations in which it is possible to participate using rail will be preferred.

- Rail will be used for all trips within the peninsular territories of Spain when the duration of the rail trip is less than 6 hours *(this threshold should be discussed and validated internally and reviewed on a regular basis to increase its ambition).*

- For international trips, rail shall be prioritised for all medium and long distance journeys lasting up to 6 hours *(this threshold should be discussed and validated internally and reviewed on a regular basis to increase its ambition).*

- For all international trips within the European Union, rail shall always be considered, comparing at least the following parameters of the air (if necessary) and land transportation alternatives: price, emissions, duration and safety of the journey.

- For any activity involving air travel, the need to participate in it should be thoroughly assessed: whether the objectives pursued can be achieved without travel, whether online participation is possible and whether the benefit for the individual and the organisation justifies the use of air travel (see the [Decision tree for air travel](#)).

- In the case of having to use air transport, the least unsustainable way of flying should be chosen taking into consideration the following guidelines:
  - Prioritise direct flights, when routes are available, even if they are more expensive.
  - If direct flights are not available on the chosen date, consider new dates.
  - Always travel in economy class to avoid the additional environmental impact of higher classes (using more space per seat and therefore inducing more emissions per passenger).
  - Select [airlines with lower emissions intensity](#) on the basis of their energy and climate efficiency.
  - Avoid creative ticketing[1], even if it reduces fares, since it exponentially increases emissions per passenger-kilometre.

In the case of a trip covered by an external entity, if this entity does not agree to cover the train journey, our organisation will cover the difference between the flight and train fares.

- In addition to reducing the climate footprint of the journey, we should favour sustainable **accommodation** by prioritising eco-certified hotels that are implementing energy efficiency programs, and encourage sustainable behaviours around **food** (avoid food spillover, prioritise local, seasonal, and organic food over high-carbon food such as meat or dairy).

c. Financing

The commitments made in this policy necessarily entail the allocation of funds to meet the expenses derived from its implementation. The organisation commits to allocating expenditure in the annual budget to deal with this foreseeable increase in transportation costs, including:

- The potential cost difference between the train and air journeys.

- The higher cost resulting from choosing a direct flight, in case it is necessary to use air travel.

d. Building an organisational culture that promotes sustainable travel

- We will prioritise initiatives, projects and activities that minimise the need for travel. Events and meetings that necessarily require people to travel will adopt in their organisation the necessary guidelines to minimise the associated emissions.

---

[1]*Creative ticketing* is a way of obtaining cheaper fares by purchasing more air tickets than initially needed and only using some of them eventually.

- In order to promote the use of sustainable means of transport, the principles and commitments presented in this policy will be integrated into our related **operating procedures**: human resources (accounting and compensation of hours worked while travelling, coverage of expenses, etc.), project management (budgeting, participation in / organisation of activities), etc.

- **Remote meeting and work** will be encouraged as a tool to reduce the number of trips of the organisation. To this end, the staff will be accompanied throughout the process and will be trained in online communication tools and working techniques/softwares if needed. We will also invest in technologies that facilitate this way of working.

- The use of specialised **train travel websites and agencies** will be encouraged among the staff. We shall make available to the employees and collaborators a database with information about such entities to facilitate the booking and purchasing of tickets with clean means of transport.

- Discussions on the importance of making progress on organisational transportation policies —which include making it easier to attend meetings using more sustainable means of transport than air travel, preferably the train— will be promoted within the organisation and networks in which we are active.

- We will run **regular training courses,** capacity building activities and awareness campaigns for staff and key stakeholders on the impact of travel and the alternatives options for sustainable mobility.

- We will promote **local mobility** on the spot: avoid using regular taxis, prioritise public transport, bicycles, electric vehicles or shared transport.

Recommended tools to adopt more sustainable mobility practices:

Determine the **emissions** generated in each trip:

- [**Atmosfair**](): Calculate your flight's CO_2 footprint and offsetting costs in renewable energy projects.
- [**EcoPassenger**](): Compare the energy consumption, the CO_2 emissions and other environmental impacts for planes, cars and trains in passenger transport.

Find the **alternatives** to plane and car by train:

- [**Trainline**](): Price comparison website for trains and buses.
- [**Direct train connections**](): This shows all direct long-distance railway connections from a given train station.
- [**Chrono trains**](): This map shows how far you can travel from each station in Europe in less than 5 hours.

The present document has been developed based on the [Travel Smart Campaign](), the [Stay Grounded travel policy guides]() and [Ecologistas en Acción]() travel policy.