

Recommendations for sustainable traveling

Science cannot do without personal exchange – including face-to-face meetings. Some research is altogether impossible without travelling. Nevertheless, science funders and researchers have to and want to do their part to reduce emissions. These recommendations for sustainable travelling are intended to help you do so.

A. For researchers in current funding programs: Use of your agreed upon travel budget

1. Consider if a planned high-emission trip is really necessary by asking yourself the following questions¹:

- How important is the occasion of this trip for me? What do I miss if I do not take part (or, in case of a returning event, if I only take part next time)?
- How many people from my project are going to the event? Should I rather let colleagues who are in an earlier career stage participate?
- Is it possible to participate online? What would be the benefit of me being there in person?
- Can I combine different work trips, e.g. a conference, fieldwork, a visit to a cooperating institute?

2. Opt for the means of transportation that causes the least CO₂ emissions – and make the most of your trip:

For travels financed by the Volkswagen Foundation...

- ... additional costs for greener travelling will be covered (e.g. additional costs for a (night) train instead of flying, additional accommodation costs and daily allowances).
- ... travels that take up to 8 hours should be made by train if this is possible.
- ... costs for flights within a European country will usually² not be covered.
- ... the costs for taxis and private cars will, as a rule,³ only be covered if the destination cannot be reached by public transportation

¹ Taken from the "[Flight Decision Tree](#)" of the ETH Zürich.

² Exception: Connecting flights in case of liability issues when the flights are missed due to delayed trains.

³ Exceptions: Countries where the use of public transportation comes with substantial security risks; fieldwork in rural areas

- ... more efficient airlines⁴ and direct connections should be used when flying is unavoidable.
- ... travel costs for events (in particular for conferences) will, as a rule,⁵ only be covered if you stay for the entire event.
- ... you should plan with a minimum stay of three days for inner-continental and seven days for intercontinental trips, when flying is necessary. Longer stays are recommended (see the last point of A1).

3. Be as creative and open-minded as you are in your research:

Developing a new culture of cooperation and internationalization that is lower in CO2 emission requires individual actors to be open for change⁶. We want to encourage you to experiment with innovative formats of online and hybrid collaboration and networking. You might try “Hub Conferences”, for example, or make use of courses at your home institution on how to make the most of collaborative online tools.

What we offer you to facilitate virtual exchange:

Should you decide during a running cooperation project that you want to rely more on online collaboration you can repurpose your travel funds to also purchase equipment for your cooperation partners at institutions in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) in order to facilitate virtual exchange (max. 1000 EUR per institution).

4. Emissions: you reduce and avoid – we will compensate:

Currently, CO2 compensation (as offered for instance by atmosfair) cannot be bought from the funds we provide. However, the Foundation is in the process of evaluating what the best way is to compensate our own, as well as the unavoidable emissions of those we fund and invite in the future.

B. For applicants:

1. Account for the travel funds you apply for in light of the travel policy of your home institution (if applicable) and the questions listed under A1.
2. When calculating your travel budget, take into account the guidelines listed under A2.
3. Be creative! Try new tools and formats of collaboration and networking. The offer to repurpose travel funds to facilitate virtual exchange with colleagues in LMIC (see A3) does of course also apply for new applicants.

⁴ Choose, for example, flights that emit “less CO2 than a typical flight on this route” on [skyscanner.com](https://www.skyscanner.com)

⁵ Exception: family duties or illness

⁶ Compare ALLEA (2022) Towards Climate Sustainability of the Academic System in Europe and Beyond. Berlin. DOI 10.26356/climate-sust-acad